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Fred Halliday

**Counter-Revolution in the Yemen**

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Göran Therborn

**Frankfurt Marxism: a Critique**

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Tariq Ali

**Class Struggles in Pakistan**

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Bill Warren

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The death of Gamal Nasser was the signal for official hypocrisy on a world-wide scale, of a rare unanimity. Without exception, every major power praised the dead man and his heritage. Revolutionary militants can only feel cold contempt for this celebration, and its object. Nasser ended his career in the embraces of the feudal rulers of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—a dying symbol of the destiny of petty-bourgeois nationalism in our time. His last act was to preside sanctimoniously over the counter-revolutionary massacre with which King Hussein tried to crush the Commune of Amman: a paper Bismarck guaranteeing a puppet Thiers for contemporary imperialism. A full account of the ignominious Egyptian role in Jordan can only emerge after the dust settles there. In this issue, therefore, we publish a case-history of Egyptian intervention in an Arab Revolution—the Yemen. There, after many struggles, the popular masses have now been stifled by an alliance of feudalists from Riyadh and bureaucrats from Cairo. It is a fitting reminder of the political character of Nasserism in the 'sixties.

Of all the currents of 20th-century Marxism in the West, the most widely known today is the one which goes by the name of the Frankfurt School. Marcuse's work has achieved mass circulation throughout Western Europe and America, while Adorno and Horkheimer, though less publicized have also been influential. Their ideas thus provided a natural

jumping-off point for the revolutionary student movement. However, the intellectual origins and the problematic underlying this tradition are much less familiar. Göran Therborn discusses them in a critical article.

The CPGB is one of the few European Communist Parties which has elaborated an official political programme, 'The British Road to Socialism'. A pioneering feature of this programme since the first version was adopted in 1951 is that it envisages a parliamentary transition to socialism in Britain. This made the CPGB the first Communist Party to adopt such a perspective; Party leaders have claimed that this innovation was made at the personal instigation of Stalin himself and it certainly must have met with his approval. In this issue of the Review we publish a critique of the most recent edition of the programme by a member of the CPGB.



## Counter-Revolution in the Yemen

The September 1962 revolution in the Yemen transformed it from an isolated and archaic survival from the Middle Ages which even imperialism was content to let slumber, into the fulcrum of the liberation struggle in the Arabian peninsula throughout the ensuing decade. The embattled Yemeni Republic became the testing ground of Arab nationalism and the supply base for liberation in the South. The final conclusion of a cease-fire agreement between royalists and republicans in May 1970 brought this period to a close. Saudi Arabia and Britain now recognized the Republic they had fought so bitterly to destroy. The *Economist* hailed it as 'the best news to come out of the Arab world for many a month'. The perspective of a workers' and peasants' revolution in the Yemen, which had been placed on the agenda by the civil war, has been extinguished by the cease-fire, if only temporarily. The port workers of Hodeida the Yemen's largest port, went on strike in opposition to it, and three of them were killed in the repression which followed. But though the Republic survives only in name, the revolutionary process which its proclamation in 1962

inaugurated continues to advance in Dhofar. In an attempt to contain this revolt the British government sponsored a coup d'état in July 1970 in its semi-colony, the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman.<sup>1</sup> The Yemeni revolution demands close study if the causes of its ambiguous outcome are to be understood. It provides eloquent evidence of the hopeless inadequacy of Nasserism to the present tasks of the Arab revolution as well as an indication that the possibility of a revolutionary alternative to Nasserism now exists.

### Yemeni Society

The forces that provoked the 1962 revolution were the result of the gradual contraction and entropy of Yemeni society under the weight of the Imamate and the parasitic and exploitative institutions surrounding it. Yemen had had a prosperous past, based on organized agrarian production. The under-development of the Yemen was not the result of any static 'primitiveness' nor of the crushing of a pre-capitalist society by the irruption of capitalist imperialism. Its primary cause was the internal social formation of Yemeni society<sup>2</sup>.

The Yemen has an area of about 75,000 square miles and a population of 4.5 million. Unlike the rest of the peninsula it has a tropical climate and a settled agrarian population. For this reason it was known to the Romans as 'Arabia Felix'. Its major division was by religious denomination. In the mountains of the north lived the Zeidis, followers of Shi'a Islam and ruled by an Imam. In the coastal plain, the Tihama, and in the south the population were Shafeis, followers of Sunni Islam.

Historically both Yemen and what is now South Yemen had been united under the Imams, but the South had broken away in 1728, and this division was reinforced when the British occupied Aden and much of the South in 1839. The Yemen proper fell for a time under Turkish occupation later in the century, but the Turks were unable to conquer the Zeidi areas. When they were defeated in the First World War they withdrew, and left the Yemen as an independent area. The Imam, Imam Yahya of the Hamid ed-Din family, was then able to unify the country under his rule. He had been made Imam in 1904 and ruled until his assassination in 1948. He was then succeeded by his son Ahmad, who ruled until 1962.

<sup>1</sup> The struggle in Dhofar, which began in June 1965, spread in June 1970 to Oman, five hundred miles to the north-east. The organization leading the fight in Dhofar is the *Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf*. A separate organization is fighting in Oman, the *National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf*. They are separate organizations but in a close alliance. It was the outbreak of armed struggle in Oman that led the British to purge the Sultan of Muscat and Oman in July. I have given an account of the struggle in this area in 'Report from Dhofar' *Black Dwarf*, No. 31, March 1970.

<sup>2</sup> This article draws on a visit to South Yemen and on the following major sources: Said el-Attar, *Le sous-développement économique et social du Yemen* (Algiers, 1964) Manfred W. Wenner *Modern Yemen 1918-1966* (Baltimore, 1967); and Sultan Omar, *Naxra fi Tala'war al-Majma'a al-Yamani* (Beirut 1970). The first is by a Yemeni Marxist economist, the last by a militant of the Arab Nationalist Movement who participated in the struggles in both the Yemen and South Yemen; it includes an application to pre-Muallim Yemeni society of Marx's *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (London, 1964) and the introduction by Eric Hobsbawm.

The Hamid ed-Din Imams aimed to consolidate their power by two policies: by strengthening traditional social relations underneath them, and by excluding all foreign influences—political, economic or intellectual. Isolation was not a haphazard or aberrant individual quality of the Imams. It directly served to preserve their position. Imam Ahmad was clear on this point: 'One must choose between being free and poor and being dependent and rich. I have chosen independence'. As a result, Yemen in 1962 had not a single Yemeni doctor, modern school, railway, or industrial factory. Its average per capita income was \$70.

Under the Imams over 80 per cent of the Yemeni population were peasants. In the Tihama the majority of them were share-croppers working on the estates of landowners who were either merchants, notables or Zeidi Sada. In the mountains the peasants tended to be small independent farmers, clustered in villages. Apart from these two main forms of ownership a significant portion of the land was held by the Imam himself—either as state lands, or as religious endowments given to him as Imam by landowning families. The income from both of these went to his treasury. Finally, a few relics of collectively owned land remained among the Ismaili minority, descendants of an early Muslim primitive communist sect.

Within this system the surplus was extracted in several ways. First share-croppers working on the lands of the big owners paid between one-quarter and one-third of their crops (in the mountains) and up to three-quarters (in the Tihama) to the landowner. If the peasant provided his own tools he was entitled to a larger share of the crop. These share-cropping relations were made annually, and the relationship between peasant and owner was not institutionalized in the way in which that between serf and feudal lord was in Europe. In the absence of any other social or ethnic class of moneylenders, usury was controlled by the landowners.

Rigorous taxation was a further means of extracting the surplus. The basic tax was *zakat*, allegedly a religious due paid by all Muslims; it went into the Imam's treasury. The minimal rate was 10 per cent of all crops, in addition to which the tax-collector could take a further 'commission', which he fixed at will. As there was no cadastral survey and as crops were quantified on sight the estimations of tax were imprecise and open to bribery and coercion of different kinds, the peasant paying the tax-collector a bribe to stop him from taking even more in tax. Animals were also taxed at a fixed rate per head. The tax collector took on average 25 per cent of the peasant's crop, and after all other levies had been extracted, the peasant was left with 20 per cent of his produce.

The crops grown by the peasants fell into two groups: those for local consumption and those for sale as commodities on the internal or international market. The major component of the first category were cereals (millet, wheat, maize), certain vegetables (beans, peas, potatoes) and some fruit. Cereals formed their basic diet, meat was consumed only on special occasions, and rice was imported. Three main crop

were grown for the market: coffee, cotton and qat. In the past coffee had been Yemen's main export, but after the end of the Second World War its production fell from 12,000 tons per year to 5,000 in 1962.

The crop that advanced most, to displace both coffee and other foods, was qat, a narcotic that plays a crucial role in the Yemeni economy and society. Qat is a small shrub, the leaves of which are chewed and stimulate the chewer giving him a sense of wellbeing. It is not hallucinogenic and its effects, in comparison with hash, speed or alcohol are mild. The leaves are kept in the mouth for hours and masticated slowly into a soggy green mush. Its effects wear off once chewing stops, but it leaves a sense of mild depression and in the long run adversely affects sexual potency. The chewing of qat at all-male social gatherings is the centre of the Yemen social day and although it is always claimed that qat helps the chewer to work and concentrate the social nexus within which qat is consumed is one of enforced and routinized passivity, as groups of men sit around between 2 and 8 and discuss whatever occurs to them. 'From the afternoon to sunset all activity ceases and the Yemenis are plunged into an ecstatic torpor.'<sup>3</sup>

Under the Imams coffee production gave way to qat because coffee exports were heavily taxed and because the roads were bad, ruining trucks quickly, and therefore making the transporters impose a high charge to cover their costs. This deprived Yemen of its major source of foreign earnings. Qat was also a negative phenomenon because it reduced the amount a peasant spent on food for himself and his family, and contributed to undernourishment.

Ten to fifteen per cent of the population lived in cities, the most important of which were San'a and Ta'iz, the twin capitals of the Imamate, and the ports of the coast, the most important being Hodeida. These towns were not the result of any industrialization and there was not a single modern factory in the Yemen. A textile factory built in 1957 never went into operation because of the opposition of merchants who controlled the import of cotton goods.

The two major economically active sections of the urban population were the merchants and the artisans. The former were mainly Shafei and lived off foreign trade and lending money to the government at short-term. Imam Ahmad tried to concentrate all foreign trade in the hands of his favourite, al-Jabaly, and this, combined with the punitive taxation, created a strong merchant opposition, based on an exiled commercial community in Aden. Because of Imamate confiscations, and because taxes were so high merchants were reluctant to invest capital in Yemen and exported it where possible.

At the apex of this system were the Imam and the Zeidi notables, the *Sada*, who controlled the administration and the army, and owned much of the best land. They were defined by their alleged descent from Mohammad, and totalled around 300,000 altogether. Next came the tribal chiefs, sheikhs, who acted as local administrators and were often

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<sup>3</sup> Said el-Attar, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

responsible for helping tax-collectors. They relied on the acceptance of the tribesmen and were often hereditary, but the Imams would pay them subsidies which they would then distribute to preserve loyalty. Below them came the merchants and artisans. Most numerous of all were the enormous mass of rural peasants, illiterate sick, all under-employed and helplessly imprisoned in tribal and religious particularism. It was a society overwhelmed with misery. In 1962 there were only 15 doctors—all foreigners. There were 600 hospital beds in the whole country, 50 per cent of the population had venereal diseases, 80-90 per cent suffered from trachoma. The government spent no money on education and less than 5 per cent of the children attended the existing Koranic schools.

This society was often classified loosely as 'medieval' or 'feudal', by authors searching for the nearest European analogy. In the sense of an archaic society based on agrarian production it was medieval but it differed significantly from feudalism in the strict sense, specifically because it lacked feudal relations between the landowners and the agrarian worker. Relations between peasants and landowners were in money or kind and liable to dissolution. Nor did Yemen under the Imamate conform to the model of the Asiatic mode of production, since although taxes were in some cases paid by a village collectively ownership of land was individual, and there were only a few remnants of collective village ownership. It was a society that was based on pre-capitalist agrarian but non-feudal production.

### The Tribal Structure

While it was divided horizontally into classes it was also divided vertically into tribes. Although these were settled, they preserved many of the features of the nomadic system. Within each tribe a tribal leader a sheikh who held his position by being elected from the leading family had the task of settling disputes and representing the tribe in external relations—with other tribes or in dealings with the government or conscription or taxation. These tribal leaders often received subsidies which served to give them a certain economic power within the tribe. But they were not in general big land-owners exploiting the fellahs and their power derived from their control over the collecting of taxes and the distribution of bribes and arms. Given the historical absence of a mode of production capable of unifying the Yemen, the ideological and social autonomy of the tribes remained unimpaired. Outside of the towns tribesmen were primarily conscious of their own membership of a specific tribe, of their solidarity in defence and attack with other members. While in individual cases peasants clashed with the sheikhs of their own tribe, this contradiction was subordinate to their solidarity with the sheikh as tribal leader *vis-à-vis* other tribes.

Relations between the tribes and the centre were never secure. A system of shifting alliances operated, in that the Imam could control a tribe by coercion or inducement but would lose it if he appeared to be weak. The Imam's main purpose was to divide the tribes to prevent hostile confederation from forming against him. One of the common means of coercion was the taking of hostages from tribes, to ensure

their good behaviour. But if this failed, the Imam would attack using tribal levies. He also had a small regular army, which was used to enforce tax-collection. Its anthem, the *Samel*, included the lines: 'We, the soldiers of the king, are stronger than all the peasants.'

The major tribal hostility to the centralized state was crushed by 1939, but during the Second World War a new opposition emerged, centred on Shafei merchants in exile in Aden, who resented the Imam's hold on the economy and the inability to develop stronger commercial ties with the outside world. This group, the *Free Yemenis*, were in alliance with dissident nationalist officers in the army and staged a putsch in 1948. But though they killed the Imam his son Ahmad was able to re-establish control. Another coup attempt in 1955 was made by one of the Imam's brothers who had close ties with American oil interests. He and his allies in the army besieged the Imam in his castle, but were crushed and executed.

In 1956 the Imam initiated a cautious diplomatic alliance with Egypt and the Soviet Union, partly to stave off the threat which Arab nationalism posed, and partly to win support for his own attempts to dislodge the British from their colony to the south. The Imam's son—Mohammad al-Badr—was an admirer of Egypt and visited Cairo, Moscow and Peking to get aid for the Yemen. When the Imam went to Rome for a health cure in 1959 al-Badr was left in charge and proceeded to introduce a number of reforms, but the effect of this was to release the tribes and the urban population from the rigid oppression to which they had been subjected. Tribes in the north began to press their demands, while the urban population called for further reforms. Egyptian experts and teachers were brought in and encouraged this process. When Ahmad returned, revived, from Rome he tried to suppress this movement and executed the chief of the Hashed confederation. He made a last attempt to reconsolidate the Imamate and its hold over the population.

Ahmad was never able to regain control. Although temporarily restored, his health was failing, and he relied increasingly on morphine which he hoarded in his palace and encouraged his courtiers to take too. He had fits of insanity when he would retire, drugged, to a special chamber fitted with neon lights and stocked with toys with which he would play. Tribal opposition continued to grow in the northern mountains, and his brother Hassan was plotting from secure exile in the Plaza Hotel, New York. Most important of all was a Nasserite nationalist opposition, which called for democratic and nationalist reforms, and which was released from any temporizing in 1961 when Ahmad broke publicly with the Union of Arab States and with the diplomatic entente with Egypt. The break culminated in December of that year when Ahmad broadcast a poem on Yemen radio, attacking nationalization as being anti-Muslim and attacking Nasser for 'filling the earth with speeches of hate and envy'. Cairo radio replied in kind to this polemic and broadcast speeches by political exiles, who were members of the *Yemeni Union*, an exile group including both the old Free Yemenis and nationalists.

## The Imamate in Crisis

With Yemen exposed to the full political pressure of Arab nationalism, and Ahmad besieged internally by a diverse group of political opponents, the Imamate was in a mortal crisis, beset by the sclerosis of the system it had formed and unable either to suppress the contradictions it had created or to take steps to resolve them.

Ahmad himself was old, sick and suspicious. His son al-Badr had reformist urges but had no political following and lacked the ability to move decisively. The opposition—conservative tribes, political exiles, dissident officers—were all extending their contacts and gaining influence.

The economy was in regression. The punitive taxation of agrarian production and trade, combined with the prevention of any industrialization, excluded the possibility of a capitalist development and turned the commercial bourgeoisie into an opposition force. Yemen, whose main product was cereals, was a net importer of them by 1960. Coffee production had sunk to a quarter of its 1942 level. In the period 1957–59 cotton production sank from 12,000 tons to 1,000 and wheat from 20,000 to 10,000. Exports of primary products were discouraged by export taxes.

This economic crisis found its most eloquent expression in the Yemeni emigration—to Aden, Britain and East Africa. By the end of the Imamate over 1 million Yemenis—i.e. 20 per cent of the population—had left to work elsewhere.

Blocking in this way the political and economic development of the Yemen, and trying vainly to isolate it from international pressures, the Imamate had generated the conditions for an explosion that would sweep it away. This explosion was detonated by Ahmad's death, in his sleep, on September 18th, 1962.

## The Overthrow of the Imamate

When Ahmad died he was succeeded as Imam by his son, Mohammad al-Badr. A week later, on September 26th, al-Badr was overthrown by a military coup, which shelled his palace and forced him to flee to the northern mountains. The group of officers who staged the coup declared the end of the Imamate and the founding of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).

Al-Badr, fearing a coup, had brought tanks into San'a to guard his palace and had appointed an old friend, Abdullah as-Sallal to command his bodyguard. But a group of 80 officers in the army influenced by Nasserite Arab nationalism, were plotting a coup and contacted Sallal. Sallal, a Zeidi and son of a blacksmith, had been imprisoned for involvement in the 1948 coup, and agreed to work with the conspirators on condition that they made him President of the Republic. This they did.

The coup's popularity was immediate. In Ta'iz a civilian popular committee took power when the Republic was proclaimed in San'a. The Shafei merchants enthusiastically backed the Republic, as did the former Free Yemenis. Crowds swept through San'a, Ta'iz and Hodeida. In the country areas near Ibb peasants ousted sheikhs who were known for their cruelty and who had flogged peasants who did not pay their taxes. In Aden the 80,000 Yemeni working class demonstrated in favour of the Imam's overthrow.

The Republic also received the support of tribes which had been opposed to Imam Ahmad in his last years, in particular of the Hashed tribe led by sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar. Thousands of tribesmen swarmed into San'a with petitions and offered to fight for Sallal. But few of them had any precise idea of what the Republic stood for, except that it was against the Hamid ed-Din family.

These initial reactions revealed the obscure nature of the coup. It had been carried out by a section of the armed forces, without the participation or knowledge of the masses or even of those sections of the intelligentsia and the commercial bourgeoisie who later came to support it. It released a wave of spontaneous popular enthusiasm from all classes, but the contradictions within this support were soon clear. The urban and rural masses were excluded from active participation in it, and this gave it an ambiguous character. The masses lacked any autonomous organization of their own or any coherent consciousness of their own aims. They had therefore to rely on the army and the Republic in the absence of any other political leadership. This meant that forces wishing to crush or contain the revolution were not faced with an organized opposition. In particular, it aided the commercial bourgeoisie wishing to unleash Yemeni capitalism and the tribe leaders wishing to profit from the Imam's fall to advance their own strength.

The immediate actions of the military after the overthrow of the Imam were to form a cabinet of officers and some liberal civilians—al-Zubayri and Abdelrahman al-Iryani—and to promulgate a series of reforms. The Imamate was abolished with the proclamation of the Republic. Slavery and the hostage system were also suppressed. All the property of the royal family was confiscated and many former Sada administrators were put on trial. At the same time a number of economic measures were taken to unblock the economy and encourage the return of exile capital. A new currency was created and a Yemen Reconstruction and Development Bank set up.

These measures expressed the limited aims of the new régime. It had as yet an undefined reformist character, and its most precise feature, apart from its hostility to the Hamid ed-Din was its intention to develop the Yemeni economy along capitalist lines, to encourage the investment of commercial profits in the economy and the entry of foreign capital. It in no way challenged the power of the landowners who were not members of the Imam's family and was not prepared for any political or ideological transformation of the society as a whole.



The groups of politicians and officers around the government formed a heteroclitite collection. Sallal himself was important as a past participant in anti-Imam moves, but without any precise ideological formation or any defined power-base, even in the army. Al-Beidhani the Vice-President was a Nasserite intellectual, in ideology and connections, and had around him a following who rallied behind Sallal when he, al-Beidhani, was forced to resign in 1963. The former Free Yemenis and Shafei merchants formed a third distinct group who were ideologically independent of the Egyptians and formed, after two years of war, an autonomous current called the 'third force' or the 'Khamer group', and whom the Egyptians sought to play off against Sallal. As influential as these merchants and urban notables were the tribal leaders who supported the republic and hoped to gain power through it; this group included sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar of the Hashed and sheikh Abdullah Tariq of the Morad tribe. Finally there came the small, urban-based, left-wing groups—the Communists (organized in the Popular Democratic Union); the Ba'this, followers of the Ba'th party which was powerful in Syria and Iraq; and the members of the Yemeni branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, which had been founded in 1959.<sup>4</sup>

These groups originated among Yemenis studying or working abroad. None of them had a large following. The Communists were intellectuals, some of whom had studied in the Soviet Union. The Ba'th were again intellectuals, mainly Zeidis, and their most prominent leader was Mohsen el-Aini. The members of the ANM were found mainly in Shafei areas, and ran the only trade union within the Yemen, which contained the workers engaged on constructing an American-financed road between Ta'iz and San'a.

Quite apart, however, from the internal diversity and weakness of the Republic it was faced from the beginning by a major external threat—the royalist opposition, based on the northern tribes, which refused to acknowledge the Republic.

It was the conflict between this royalist opposition and the forces of the Republic that lasted for the next eight years, in a protracted civil war that killed around 200,000—i.e. around 4 per cent—of the Yemen population. It was fought between the Republic aided by Egypt, the Soviet Union and China on one side and the royalists, aided by Saudi Arabia and Britain, on the other. Although the Republic survived in name it did so by falling into the hands of the most reactionary sections of the population—the major tribal leaders and the commercial bourgeoisie. These profited politically and economically from the war and were able to seize the Republic and suppress the popular opposition within it. In 1962 the revolution had two possible courses: one course towards the destruction of the power of landlords, merchants and tribal leaders and the secure exclusion of imperialism; the other

<sup>4</sup> The Arab Nationalist Movement, *Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-'Arab*, was founded in Beirut in the early 1950's by a group of nationalist Palestinian exiles, including George Habbash, Nayyef Hawatme and Mohsen Ibrahim. From 1956 to 1964 the movement was in alliance with Nasserism, and its cells spread throughout the Arab world. It disintegrated in 1968.

towards the opening of Yemen to world capitalism and the replacement of Imamate rule by that of the tribal leaders and the merchants. But it was not only the royalist and imperialist counter-attack which forced the YAR into a defensive and compromising position. It was also the way in which the political and military defence of the Republic was organized. And this was determined most of all by the Egyptian intervention and the form it assumed.

### The Egyptian Role

Faced with the counter-revolutionary royalist threat the YAR received immediate recognition and support from Egypt, the Soviet Union and China. By October 1st Egyptian paratroopers and supplies had started arriving at Hodeida, soon to be followed by regular troops. By the end of the year Egypt had around 20,000 troops in the Yemen.

This assistance came at a time when Egypt's foreign policy was on the defensive, when the union with Syria had broken up and when the Saudis were extending their influence over Arab politics.

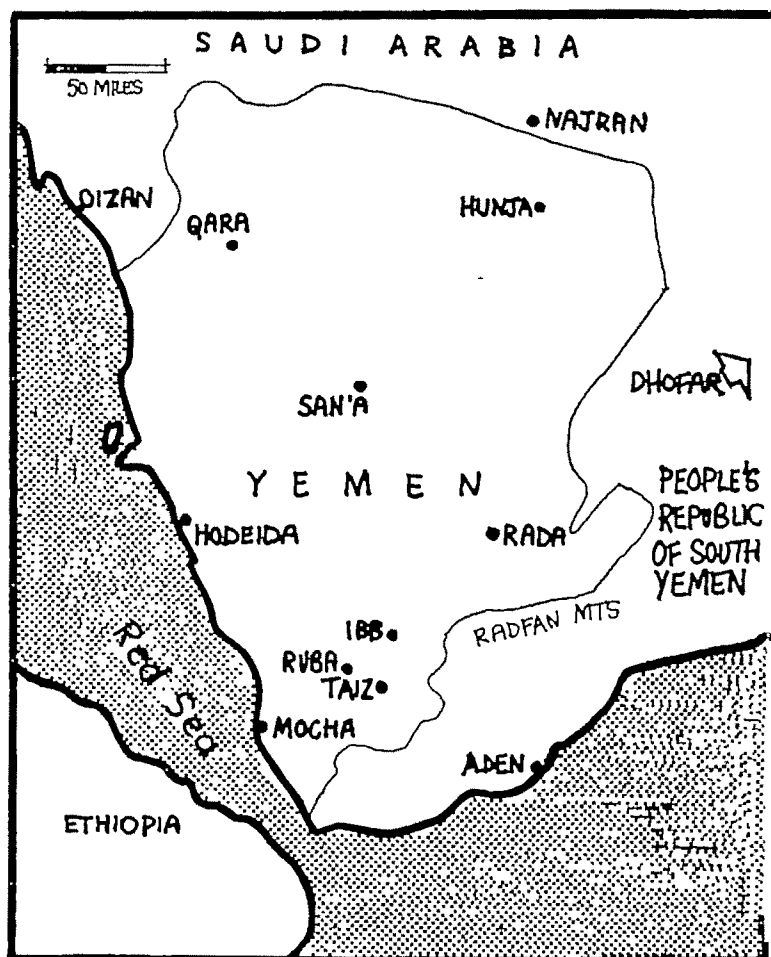
For the Egyptian régime, embattled by world imperialism and the most right-wing Arab régimes, the Yemeni revolution was an occasion to strengthen the nationalist anti-imperialist camp. The anti-imperialism of the Egyptian military state was limited in character, bounded by the class interests of its rulers, but it had a definite reality, and the intervention in the Yemen was concretely progressive for this reason, despite its limits and deformations.

However, this Egyptian intervention had from the start a character that limited its effectiveness. It did protect the Republic from being overrun by Saudi-backed tribes, and it led directly to the opening of armed struggle against the British in South Arabia. But, it dominated the YAR strategically and executively and rapidly antagonized many YAR supporters within the government, administration and the cities. Its method of intervention was bureaucratic, one of administrative take-over. Secondly, its support for the YAR, arising as it did out of the class interests of the Egyptian leadership, was limited by these interests and conditional on the war serving them. When it became clear in 1964-65 that the war was an economic and political drain on Egypt's resources, and more specifically that it was unlikely to result in the overthrow of the Saudi régime, the Egyptians forced the YAR to compromise. Ultimately, when the Egyptians became dependent on Saudi subsidies after the June war of 1967, they abandoned the Yemen altogether.

The Egyptians at once saved and deformed the YAR. By treating the YAR leadership and people as subordinate adjuncts, they restricted its ability to build a popular base. At the same time they relied on the most traditional forces within the Republic, the tribal leaders. These they bribed and armed, so that they became the most powerful force in the YAR and were able to capture the republican state for their own tribal interests. It was these tribal leaders who were to liquidate the republican forces who refused to surrender to the Saudis after the Egyptians left.

## The Civil War: 1962-67

Developments between the outbreak of the civil war in September 1962 and the final cease-fire in June 1970 fall into three broad periods. The period up to 1965 saw the most intense fighting between Egyptians and royalists when both sides aimed for a complete political and military victory. In the period 1965-67 there was a military stalemate, reflected politically in attempts at reconciliation, especially in the Jeddah meeting of Nasser and King Feisal in July 1965. It was also a period when the 'Khamer group' of dissident republicans were working towards compromise with the royalists, and the Egyptians were trying to balance them against the group around Sallal. The June 1967 defeat of Egypt by Israel opened a third phase in which Egypt left the Yemen and in which the strengthened republican tribal forces crushed an attempt by the left to continue the anti-royalist and anti-Saudi struggle. The war ended with the formation of a coalition of republican and royalist tribal forces, blessed by Saudi Arabia and openly fostering its ties with the Western world.



During the first two years of the war the Egyptians launched two military offensives, one in the spring of 1963, the 'Ramadan offensive', and the other in the summer of 1964. The military aim of both was to cut the royalist supply lines from Saudi Arabia and to capture or expel the Imam, who had his headquarters in the North-Western mountains. In both cases the Egyptians did make significant advances, but the royalists were able to fight back and the Saudis stepped up their aid.

At the end of the 1964 offensive the Egyptians tried to reach a compromise with the Saudis, and a cease-fire was temporarily arranged at a meeting of republican and royalist representatives held at Erkwit in the Sudan early in November. This attempt at conciliation failed and in 1965 the royalists counter-attacked till they controlled about 50 per cent of the territory of the Republic.

On the Republican side a distinct group had emerged, known as the 'third force' or the 'Khamer group'. Their leaders were former Free Yemenis and neutral tribal leaders, who opposed the Egyptian hold on the Republic and wanted to bring peace to the Yemen through a republican-royalist coalition. The Egyptians had their own reasons for favouring this group, while refusing to be pushed out of the Yemen in a humiliating way. The war had become unpopular in Egypt and in the army, and was losing Egypt considerable prestige. At the same time it was taking a heavy toll of money and lives. Estimates of the daily cost of the war have ranged from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 a day and by 1965 Egypt's foreign exchange reserves were depleted. The number of men killed is not officially known, but Western sources claim that the official unpublished Egyptian figure for the period October 1962 to June 1964 was 15,194 men *killed*—an average of 24 per day.<sup>5</sup>

In April 1965 the Egyptians allowed the third force leader, Noman, to form a cabinet and he convened a meeting of tribal leaders at Khamer to work out a peace platform. But this conference proved too independent, calling for the withdrawal of the Egyptians and the constitution of an 11,000-man tribal army. Noman was consequently dismissed and replaced by Sallal once again. The Egyptians were juggling with these two groups in order to find a way out, and in August 1965 Nasser went to Jedda in Saudi Arabia to try once again to reach agreement with King Feisal on a compromise solution. In return for a Saudi promise to stop aid to the royalists, Nasser agreed to start withdrawing troops from the Yemen. A transitional council of tribal, religious and military leaders was to meet at Haradh on November 23rd to organize a new coalition. But this agreement was taken without consulting Sallal. He opposed it, was detained by the Egyptians in Cairo, and replaced by General al-Amri.

Despite Egyptian and Saudi pressure, the Yemenis at the Haradh conference failed to agree and fighting resumed in 1966. The Egyptians

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<sup>5</sup> Dana Adams Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, (London 1968) p. 234. This is the fullest account of the civil war yet available, and is an informative book although written from a position sympathetic to the royalists.

had given up any hope of winning the war and withdrew their army to a strategically secure triangle, bounded by San'a, Ta'iz and Hodeida, attacking the royalists mainly from the air. The political situation continued to deteriorate, however, and al-Amri struck up an alliance with 'Khamer group' tribes. He was dismissed in August 1966 and Sallal was flown back to replace him. In a political and military impasse, the Egyptians were searching for a way to escape.

### 'Republican Feudalism'

*The standard Western interpretation of the war is that the Republic relied on the Egyptians and was bound to collapse when they left. This was also the Egyptian view. In fact the truth was quite the reverse. It was because the Egyptians made the republic rely on it that it became weaker. Moreover the republic fell not to the royalist forces without but to the republican feudalist forces within. It was the very forces whom the Egyptians relied on and built up who later turned Yemen into a Saudi satellite.*

On the military level the Egyptians were unable to cope with Yemeni conditions. Many of them, coming from the Nile delta, had never seen a mountain before in their lives. Staff-work and planning were inadequate and relations between officers and men were authoritarian. The corrupt-conventional structure of the Egyptian army expressed the structured class relations of Egyptian society itself, and the bankruptcy of that army and its defects submerged in the confusion of Yemen war starkly illuminated by the Israeli victory of June 1967. By 1964 it had become demoralized and defensive, so predictable and vulnerable in its moves that the royalists knew they could attack most easily on Thursday evenings, because it was then that the Egyptian troops would be glued to the weekly radio programme of the favourite Arab singer Umm Kalthoum. Many Egyptian local commanders took to signing truces with their royalist opponents and to negotiating safe conduct and transfers of supplies. Instead of helping to build up the Yemen state and army, they pre-empted its initiatives and fought the war as foreign invaders and not as liberators or allies of the people.

The regular army of the YAR in 1962 was under-manned and under-equipped, and needed logistical and strategic support. But the Egyptians shoved it aside. Yemeni officers sent abroad to Egypt or the Soviet Union for training were put into desk jobs and not allowed to fight. In 1964 when Sallal flew to Moscow to negotiate a separate channel of military support the Egyptians pressured the Soviet Union to cancel the agreement. This it did. In 1966 al-Amri flew to Cairo to see Kosygin then on a trip to Egypt, and he intended to ask the Soviet leader to renew the agreement. The Egyptians would not let him see Kosygin. Al-Amri also ordered some armoured cars from the German Democratic Republic, but had to cancel the order when the Egyptians told him that they themselves would take charge of the cars when they arrived. The most eloquent fact of all is that between 1962 and 1967 the Yemeni army actually *shrank* from around 20,000 men in 1962 to 7,00 in 1967.

The major force used by the Egyptians was certain 'republican' tribe

which had historically been in opposition to the Imamate, and were armed and bribed by the Egyptians to fight on their side in the war. The declaration of the Republic had released the tribes from the overlordship of the Imam, and accorded them an autonomy they had previously lacked. Each tribal sheikh was now in a position to build up his own influence and to sell his loyalty to the highest bidder. The 'republican' tribes were historically hostile to the royalists, but they needed a constant flow of arms to keep them loyal. They, and other neutral tribes without any definite preference, were in a position to extract support from both sides and to alternate between the two camps as their interest suited. The Republic removed the need for accepting a central government; the civil war provided the conditions for maximizing their power.

These tribes who built up their independence in this way were both *republican* and *'feudalist'*.<sup>6</sup> They were republican in that they welcomed the overthrow of the Imam, and wished to preserve a republic which they themselves could control. But their power-base and their aims were traditional, based on the mobilization of the peasants and warriors in their tribes, and they were determined to stamp out the reformist character of the 1962 revolution.

The forces of republican 'feudalism' gathered strength throughout the period of stalemate, until the June war of 1967, when Israel defeated Egypt. Nasser became reliant on Saudi and Kuwaiti subsidies of £110 million per year to make up for the loss of revenue from the Suez Canal. In return he agreed to withdraw his troops from the Yemen. The agreement on withdrawal was made at the Khartoum conference of Arab leaders in August and all Egyptian troops were out of Yemen by the beginning of December.

Sallal opposed this settlement, and refused to co-operate with a three-man commission on the Yemen set up by the Khartoum conference to arrange a peace. When the commission arrived in Yemen angry crowds attacked it and over 30 Egyptians were killed as a result. But Sallal had no independent base with which to resist. Al-Amri and the al-Iryani-Noman group were conspiring against him and the Egyptians allowed them all to return from abroad. The end came in November. Sallal left the Yemen to attend the Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution in Moscow, and was deposed in his absence on November 5th.

The new government that took over after the November 5th coup contained the leaders of the third force, Noman and al-Iryani, with al-Amri as head of the army. It represented a triumph for republican 'feudalism'. They had rid themselves of the man who was most associated with the Egyptian presence yet a firm opponent of the Egyptian pressure to capitulate to the royalists. But in spite of their willingness to compromise, and of the international Arab pressure to do so, a

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'republican feudalism' is that used by the Yemeni left itself. It is used here for that reason, and does not imply that the Yemen was a feudal society in the scientific sense of the term.

fresh outbreak of fighting occurred as certain hard-line royalists, led by the Imam's cousin Mohammad bin Hussein, launched a final attempt to capture San'a and monopolize future power in the Yemen. This contradiction was between different coalitions of tribal forces competing for the state, now that Egypt had left. It was in this situation that a revolutionary and popular current crystallized for the first time.

### The Emergence of the Left

The occasion for the formation of an autonomous left opposition within the YAR was the 70-day siege of San'a which followed the Egyptian departure. Lasting from early December to mid-February it was the final attempt by the Hamid ed-Din family and the tribes it controlled to sweep back into power.

The militants who forged this new opposition were mainly former members of the Arab Nationalist Movement. The small Communist group in Yemen had worked mainly with Sallal and the Egyptians. The Ba'this too were too few to play a major role, and their most prominent representative Mohsen el-Aini had become Prime Minister in the government that took over on November 5th. The ANM had had a more positive history under the Republic. After the revolution, they had opened a cultural club in Ta'iz and expanded the trade union movement from its original base among the road workers. In 1963 they formed a General Union of Ta'iz Workers, which grew into the General Union of Yemeni Workers, recognized by the Arab Confederation of Trade Unions in 1965. One of the economic effects of the war was the construction of factories in San'a and Ta'iz, the most important being the Chinese-built textile factory in San'a which employed 500 women and 800 men. The ports in Hodeida also expanded with the rise in military and consumer imports. It was among these newly created proletarians as well as the shopkeepers and intellectuals that the ANM worked and built its union and party base. But after the break with the Egyptians over the Erkwit conference in 1964, ANM members began to be dismissed from the administration, including the radio station which they had run. Their cultural club in Ta'iz was closed and three of their trade union members were killed when Egyptian soldiers attacked a march on September 26th, 1966, commemorating the fourth anniversary of the overthrow of the Imam. In 1967 they organized demonstrations against the Egyptian deformation of the Republic and their intention to reach a compromise with the royalists. It was the ANM who were behind the demonstrations in September 1967 against the visit of the tripartite peace commission.

This radicalization of the Yemeni ANM corresponded to a disintegration of the movement throughout the Arab world. The Yemeni group broke with the Egyptians before the centre, and the movement's weekly *al-Horria*, published in Beirut, was talking of the 'progressive role of the Egyptians in the Yemen' after the Yemeni branch itself had gone into opposition. But as the limits of Egypt's Arab nationalism became clearer, a tendency critical of Egypt's domestic and foreign policies emerged, inspired by Cuba and China and claiming to be 'Marxist-Leninist', but without necessarily having evolved a coherent

theory of socialist revolution in the Arab world. The nationalist and 'Marxist-Leninist' factions clashed at Congress in Beirut in the summer of 1964 and the movement then lost its centralized structure in 1968. Certain of its components acquired an autonomous political existence, including the *Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf*, the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine*, the *Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine*, and the *South Yemen NLF*.

In the period of the San'a siege the ANM, now a wholly independent organization, formed two structures to defend the Republic: a Popular Resistance Force (PRF) in San'a, Hodeida and Ta'iz which was a people's militia aided by politicized junior officers; and peasant Leagues, organized by ANM cadres, which aimed to mobilize the peasantry in the plain areas to oppose the republican feudalists.

The PRF was set up in San'a because of the absence of an adequate regular army, and because many of the leading officials of the government and many leading officers fled to safer places. All the diplomatic missions also left, except for the Chinese who sent in a squad of engineers to back the defenders. The PRF itself drew its members from unionized workers in the factories, from shopkeepers and intellectuals but it also worked with young politicized cadets at the San'a military academy. It was they, and some paratroop and commando sections of the regular army, who held the town, and after two months the siege was lifted.

By organizing in the siege the left now had an embryonic militia not only in San'a but also in Ta'iz and Hodeida and certain sections of the regular army were under its influence. Much of their support came from Shafeis who opposed the hold of big republican Zeidi tribes over the YAR. Their demands included the following: 1. Rejection of the Khartoum resolutions and of attempts to reach a compromise with the royalists; 2. The constitution of a central army to form the military basis of the republic; 3. The extension and strengthening of the PRF; 4. Equality for Shafeis and Zeidis in the government.

While the militia and militant officers were pressing these demands in the cities, peasant leagues had been set up in the areas around Ta'iz, Ibb and Radeh. This was major development. The YAR had passed no land reform decrees of any kind, apart from confiscating the lands of the Imam; further measures would have antagonized the sheikhs and landowners whom the Egyptians had been using. The organization of the peasantry was a direct attack on the position of the republican feudalists. The programme the leagues put forward was a mild one, but this reflected the weakness of class consciousness and political experience among them. Their demands were: 1. That disputes between peasants be settled free of charge, thus putting an end to extortion by lawyers; 2. The establishment of schools; 3. The building of roads, hospitals and drinking-water systems; 4. The spreading of a patriotic and revolutionary consciousness, the setting up of co-operatives and the founding of a General Yemeni Union of Small and Landless Peasants; 5. the overthrow of the political, economic and administrative power of the sheikhs and big landowners.



The extent of these leagues was small in terms of the Yemen as a whole but in some regions there was a movement against the landlords and sheikhs. In Riyashia and Hubaishia the peasants arrested landlords and announced the end of the power of their sheikhs. In the Abus area peasant leagues deposed the sheikhs and forced them to sign documents of resignation. They attacked both kinds of exploiter—the landowner and the sheik who collected taxes.

The departure of the Egyptians and the successful defence of San'a had produced a new force within the YAR that had both an urban and a rural base and was opposed to the republican feudalists. Al-Amri had had to make concessions to the PRF during the San'a siege, but he moved soon afterwards to crush this double challenge. San'a was militarily under the command of Abdul Raquib Abdul Wahhab, leader of the *Saiqa*, commandos. He was proceeding to recruit for an enlarged regular army. With the royalists defeated outside San'a the major conflict was now between the radical republicans and the republican feudalists.

### Thermidor

The first major clash came in March when a Soviet arms ship was expected to arrive at Hodeida on March 22nd. The ship was carrying 50 tanks and other arms, which al-Amri had announced he would distribute to the private armies of the big sheikhs. The PRF and the group around Abdul Raquib Abdul Wahhab opposed this and planned to seize the tanks for the regular army. They sailed off Hodeida three days before the ship was due. Al-Amri, in Cairo on his way to Peking, hurried back and mobilized 10,000 local tribesmen under Sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, a notorious republican feudalist and father-in-law of the Ba'thi leader Mohsen el-Aini. Al-Amri massed his forces outside Hodeida and marched in. The PRF, based on the port workers' union, resisted and their headquarters was destroyed. But al-Amri's forces were stronger and the PRF were crushed. Any move by the PRF in San'a was blocked as al-Amri sent an army of tribesmen under sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar of the Hashid into the town to check the left.

After the March clash the feudalists prepared to crush the left definitively, while the left underwent a process of political transformation. In June a conference of the ex-ANM cadres met to found a new organization and to evolve a new strategy. They decided: 1. To break formally with the ANM centre and to reconstitute themselves as the Revolutionary Democratic Party; 2. To base the new organization on Marxism-Leninism; 3. To fight republican feudalism by political and military means; 4. To support the left NLF in South Yemen against Qahtan ash-Sha'bi and to work towards a unified struggle; 5. To elect a Central Committee of 11 members. It will be seen that the Republican left had still not developed a clear revolutionary strategy for the seizure of power and the establishment of a workers and peasant state based on a new form of popular rule.

The Party formed an alliance with militant junior officers in the army, but their organizational control over them was weak, and the al-Amri

group had already decided to strike. The Party was in a weak position both militarily and politically, especially since it had a predominantly urban base which was exposed and liable to attack from al-Amri's tribal levies.

The decision to purge the army was taken by al-Amri in conjunction with a gathering of tribal leaders at Abs in July. It was decided to expel all left officers from the armed forces, to liquidate the PRF and to ban what were called 'subversive ideas', i.e. Marxist books and magazines. The conference called for the establishment of a 'popular army', a euphemism for an army of tribal levies, over which the sheikhs would have control.

Al-Amri, backed by the tribes, dismissed the chief of staff, Salam al-Razihi, and replaced him with Abdul Latif Deifallah, one of his followers. He then dismissed the chief of the artillery, Ali Mothanna, one of the leaders of the San'a defence. This provoked the commanders of the commandos (Abdul Raquib Abdul Wahhab), of the infantry (Major Farhan) and of the paratroopers (Major Naji) to demand Mothanna's reinstatement. Al-Amri saw that the left controlled certain sections of the army and were prepared to fight, and brought the tribes of the surrounding mountains into San'a again. Heavy fighting broke out on August 23rd and lasted for two days. 300 were killed, many of them supporters of al-Amri killed while storming the buildings controlled by the junior officers, but al-Amri triumphed once again. The PRF and the peasant leagues were dissolved and many of the leading political cadres and trade unionists fled into exile in Aden. Abdul Raquib Abdul Wahhab and twenty-one other officers were sent into exile in Algeria.

In December Abdul Raquib returned to Yemen via Aden, and started to call for the release of officers and trade unionists imprisoned after the August events. The result of this was that al-Amri sent a platoon of men who killed him by shelling his house. They then announced that he had been plotting to assassinate President al-Iryani. Al-Amri continued to purge the army, and no further serious resistance was reported. The August defeat had consolidated the position of the republican feudalists, and they had used the occasion to suppress the Revolutionary Democratic Party and the unions. The Party itself had opposed the line taken by the young officers on the grounds that they were too weak, but it had been taken unawares and was unable either to resist successfully or to move into completely clandestine work. The militants abroad continued their struggle, and after the death of Abdul Raquib 300 Yemeni students in Cairo occupied the Yemeni embassy. They protested against 'the conspiracy between certain leading circles in San'a and the royalists to make Yemen an Islamic state, which would preserve the name of the republic, but abandon the principles of the revolution'.

### The Neo-Colonial State

Throughout 1969 the al-Amri régime moved towards the final *rap-prochement* with the royalists. More and more royalist tribes were de-

fecting to the republic, and the Saudis agreed to cut off aid to the Imam provided the YAR purged the left and adopted a pro-Western foreign policy. The concept in which the Saudis summed up their demands was that the republic should become an *Islamic state*. In accordance with these pressures, al-Amri's government set up a National Assembly of religious and tribal leaders, 30 of whom were elected and 15 nominated. 12 extra seats were reserved for delegates from the South, but were never occupied. All parties were banned, and al-Amri justified this by saying that 'a political party too often works for the interests of the party and not for the country as a whole'. In foreign policy, they broke off diplomatic relations with The German Democratic Republic and re-established them with the Bonn government, and they also re-established the diplomatic relations with the US which they had previously severed. Their relations with South Yemen deteriorated accordingly, especially when the left faction within the NLF came to power in June 1969.

The occasion for a formal reconciliation came in March 1970 during a 22-nation Islamic Conference called in Jeddah by the Saudis. The Yemeni delegation was led by Mohsen el-Aini, and on March 28th he reached agreement with King Feisal on an end to polemics, a final cease-fire and the end of Saudi subsidies to the royalists. The National Assembly was then expanded to include 18 royalists and 6 royalists were brought into the cabinet. Only the Imam's family were prevented from returning. By July diplomatic relations between the YAR and Saudi Arabia had been established and the last royalist opposition had ceased. Protected by Saudi Arabia, the republican feudalists were secure.

The Yemen in 1970 had been transformed by the civil war that led out of the coup. Politically power had been taken from the Imam and his Zeidi *Sada* and seized by a new coalition of tribal leaders and merchants. Economically it had been opened to capitalism, as a subordinate component, and the first members of an urban proletariat had started work. It was possible for pre-capitalist forces to hegemonize this new state and society, but it is impossible to argue that nothing constitutive had altered in the Yemen. A more radical transformation had been bloodily excluded. But Thermidor and 1815 did not eradicate 1789. Similarly the solidly reactionary character of the al-Amri régime cannot cancel out the changes Yemen has undergone. The new ruling class was organically tied to imperialism and the economy had been wrenched out of its pre-capitalist slumbers.

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This process of deformed change was clear in both the administration and the economy. The *Sada* who had monopolized the administration up to 1962 were expelled; some of their leaders were executed. The new members of the administration were nominees of the tribal leaders, or Shafei urban intellectuals. The character of the administration was similarly altered from being a compact adjunct to the Imam's autocracy to being a sprawling parasitic institution, absorbing 80 per cent of the budget in wages and feeding off foreign aid. By 1968-69 there were 13,525 officials.

In the towns the first factories were built—for textiles, soft drinks, and household goods. They were built with both foreign private capital and aid from the USSR and China. The indigenous Yemeni bourgeoisie continued to concentrate on trade and the growing proportion of Yemen's imports were diverted from Aden to Hodeida. After the nationalization of foreign firms in Southern Yemen in November 1969, Adeni merchant firms, including the major one A. Besse, moved to Hodeida. As a result of the growing black market and unbalanced import of consumer goods the trade deficit rose to 75 per cent in 1968, financed by foreign loans, and the value of the Yemeni rial sank from 6.60 South Yemeni shillings in 1964 to 1.20 shillings in 1970.

The merchants who controlled and expanded this trade were mainly Shafei who had been in exile under the Imam and their central concern was to establish a monopoly for expensive Western goods from which they could take a significant profit. For example, they established a monopoly for the import of Rothman's cigarettes, although the alternative Chinese variety were four times cheaper. A similar logic lay behind the decision to break off relations with the GDR in 1969 and to re-establish them with the Bonn régime.

This final takeover of the YAR was the culmination of eight years effort by imperialism and Arab reaction to crush the revolution. The close alliance of these two forces is worth documenting.

### British Intervention: 'Turning a Blind Eye'

Apart from Saudi Arabia, Britain played a greater role than any other reactionary power;<sup>7</sup> it was a murky and pernicious affair, shrouded by the euphemisms of the British press, and by the transparent but resilient workings of British ideology. The British soldiers fighting and working in the Yemen were dismissed as 'gung-ho types' or 'mercenaries', and the constant flow of arms, money and equipment into royalist areas was concealed with a complacent silence. Unlike the US which tried to insulate Saudi Arabia, the British in South Arabia felt directly threatened by the presence of Egyptian troops in the Yemen. The Egyptian intervention, and the subsequent rising in the Radfan mountains, awoke in British minds and in the press the latent anti-Arab racism that had slumbered since the defeat of 1956 over Suez. Their response was commensurate with this awareness.

The major path of support was to send arms and money across the border into royalist Yemen, through the state of Beihan, one of the components of the South Arabian Federation. The man chosen to act as intermediary in this was the ruler of Beihan, 'the clever, adventurous, dynamic and above all loyal Sharif Hussein'.<sup>8</sup> Camel caravans from Beihan left regularly for the royalist mountains around San'a,<sup>9</sup> and the

<sup>7</sup> Saudi Arabia supplied the main arms and money to the royalists, but small contributions came also from Jordan, Iran and Pakistan. The royalists even sent a delegation to Israel in March 1963, but the Israelis considered the logistical problems too great (*Le Monde*, May 16th, 1967).

<sup>8</sup> Sir Tom Hickinbotham, *Aden*, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Dana Adams Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

Sharif also supplied the royalists with Land Rovers. In the first days of the revolution, Sharif Hussein had advised and aided members of the Imam's family and he kept up an unflagging support until he was driven into exile by the South Yemenis in the summer of 1967. He is now one of the leaders of the counter-revolutionary movement in exile. He himself was an impoverished tribal leader who had depended on a British subsidy, yet the world was invited to believe that he had, in 1962, become the sudden possessor of considerable supplies of money and arms. It was clear, however, that he was a front man for a British intelligence operation. He also received Saudi funds, channelled through the Aden branch of National and Grindlays Bank.

A second major means to aid the royalists was by sending in British mercenaries, 'retired'—but obviously still very active—army officers, who were organized by various agencies. Of these one of the most important was *Watchguard International Ltd*, run by Colonel David Sterling; he is a former war hero and member of the Special Air Service, a commando group that had operated behind enemy lines in the Second World War.<sup>10</sup> These agencies and mercenaries *claimed* to be independent of the British government, but several points cast doubt on this claim. In 1967 Sterling put a plan to the Saudi government to send into the Yemen 'a task force' of mercenaries to 'cause destruction on a massive scale (using relatively sophisticated techniques)<sup>11</sup> and added that this operation would have 'access to the sas Regiment of the British army'. Another indication of the connection is that Anthony Alexander Boyle the aide-de-camp of the British High Commissioner in Aden, was found to have contact with these mercenary groups, and while allegedly no longer on official service, was a frequent visitor to the royalist areas of the Yemen. The mercenaries could not possibly have operated without official British approval and encouragement, whatever the formal relationship between them.

The first mercenaries came to Yemen in 1963 and were mainly involved in training royalist troops and in running the radio communications system. However, in 1964 British mercenaries shelled San'a during a royalist attack. When Eric Rouleau of *Le Monde* visited the royalist areas in 1967 he found British mercenaries running the radio system; they were paid by 'a mysterious centre in London, which is called by the elliptical name of the Organization. This is supposed to be run by . . . Colonel Sterling and Major Brooke'. When he asked a royalist tribal leader about a British mercenary he saw, he was told: 'He is one of the many British historians who are enquiring from us about contemporary events in the Yemen'.<sup>12</sup> The mercenaries received up to £10,000 a year, and there were reckoned to be about 500 of them in the period from 1964 to 1967. Although the main mercenaries were British, French and Belgian ones were also involved in training; they were often veterans of Algeria and the Congo, who hated 'les nassériens, amis des viets et des fellaghas'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Sunday Times*, January 18th, 1970.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Le Monde*, May 16th, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion : The Strategic Importance

The paradox of the British intervention and of the civil war as a whole is that the revolution was suppressed in Yemen itself, while it spread to other areas of the peninsula. The Yemeni Thermidor is a major blow to the revolutionary struggle elsewhere. South Yemen is far weaker economically than the north and a hostile northern flank means that the People's Republic is now isolated except on its small eastern frontier with Dhofar.

This situation has meant the postponement of plans for reunifying the Yemen, which were assumed during the liberation struggle. It was only after the independence of the South that the political obstacles became clear, and relations between the two régimes deteriorated. The north is now a refuge for political exiles from the South, and is busy strengthening its ties with the states with which the South is either at war (Saudi Arabia) or has broken diplomatic relations with (the USA).<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand the Yemeni revolution was an anti-imperialist revolution of great significance for the whole peninsula. The old Imam was not an imperialist client, but his archaic state was an effective buffer, and his prophylactic alliance with Nasser between 1958 and 1961 served to protect both himself and the British in Aden. The revolution brought Egyptian troops and influence into the peninsula and led directly to the outbreak of armed struggle in South Arabia (October 14th, 1963) and in Dhofar (June 9th 1965). The former led to the overthrow of the pro-British Sultans and sheikhs of the South Arabian Federation, and to the establishment of the People's Republic of South Yemen in November 1967. The latter had captured nine-tenths of Dhofar by the middle of 1970.

The limitations of the Egyptian intervention in Yemen have been discussed, and this deformed character of their aid meant that Yemen played a key role in the more general crisis of Arab nationalism that spread throughout the Arab world in the 1960's. The first break with Nasserism's supremacy came with the secession of Syria from the United Arab Republic in 1961. The Yemen war was another factor. So too was the growing opposition within Egyptian society itself, as peasants, students and workers began to criticize the bureaucracy created by Nasserite 'socialism'.<sup>15</sup> This process culminated in the cataclysm of Israel's victory in June 1967.

Both the South Yemeni NLF and the liberation forces in Dhofar and

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<sup>14</sup> The party that seized power in Aden when the British left was the National Liberation Front, a former branch of the ANM, which had broken with the Egyptians in 1966 and had eliminated the Egyptian-backed group FLOSY. The NLF was dominated at first by Qahtan ash-Sha'bi, who imprisoned the leaders of the left in March 1968. But in June 1969 he himself was overthrown and the left faction of the NLF came to power. The experience of South Yemen and of Dhofar shows the possibility of combating tribal structures and of pursuing the anti-imperialist struggle in a relatively pre-capitalist society.

<sup>15</sup> See Mahmoud Hussein, *Les luttes de classe en Egypte*, (Maspero, 1969).

Oman grew out of Nasserism in this period, and the Yemen was consequently important as part of a more general process that revealed the class limits of Arab nationalism.

For the moment imperialism may congratulate itself on the success of counter-revolution in the Yemen. But the profound social conflict which followed the overthrow of the Iman led to the liberation of the South and the extension of armed struggle to Dhofar and Oman. The Gulf itself is threatened and British and American imperialism are showing great signs of concern. The course of the civil war not only exposed the limits of Nasserism—it also showed that the urban and rural masses could be mobilized in a revolutionary fashion even in a society which had been as isolated and arrested as the Yemen.

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## The Programme of the C.P.G.B.— A Critique

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### I

For some time now, the present writer has increasingly felt that the Communist Party's strategy for achieving socialism in Britain, as embodied in its programme, *The British Road To Socialism*,<sup>1</sup> is characterized by grave theoretical ambiguities and unresearched but crucial formulations. What follows is an attempt to articulate these feelings in an organized fashion in the hope that the discussion will be taken up by others. The elaboration of an alternative strategy is not the aim of this paper but such an elaboration can usefully begin from a critique of the most clearly worked-out existing strategy. From such a critique it does seem possible to identify at least some crucial elements of an alternative strategy.

### II

At the risk of over-simplification we may summarize the Communist Party's strategy as follows:<sup>2</sup>

1. Existing democratic rights and traditional means of struggle must and can be used to achieve a parliamentary majority pledged to socialism. Such a majority will then enact legislation to destroy capitalist power and build a socialist state;<sup>3</sup>
2. Such a parliamentary majority can only be achieved as the climax of mass struggle;<sup>4</sup>
3. Mass struggle capable of achieving such a victory must be based on the experience gained by the creation of a broad popular alliance of all the sections of society whose interests are threatened by the big monopolies, i.e. the vast majority of the population;<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All references are to the Third Revised Edition of October 1968. Subsequent use of the initials *BR* refers to this document. A draft of the following critique was first presented at the Smith Group, a discussion group composed of both members and non-members of the C.P.G.B.

<sup>2</sup> The summary below is not given in the order of appearance of the main theses in the *BR* but represents the author's attempt to sum up the strategy as concisely and accurately as possible. Certain ambiguities in the text may, however, mean that I have misinterpreted some points.

<sup>3</sup> *BR*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> *BR*, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> *BR*, pp. 47-48, 28-30.

4. The core of the broad popular alliance (or anti-monopoly alliance) is to be constituted by a united working class and a united labour movement, the latter being defined as the Labour Party, the Communist Party, the Trade Unions and the Co-operative Societies;<sup>6</sup>
5. The indispensable basis for success in establishing the broad popular alliance is communist-labour unity, with the left having won leadership and a majority in the Labour Party<sup>7</sup>;
6. The anti-monopoly alliance will be created and fight on the basis of a programme of democratic planning, economic expansion, including increased public ownership, and the defence and extension of democracy;<sup>8</sup>
7. While the programme of the anti-monopoly alliance will not in itself be a socialist programme,<sup>9</sup> the struggle for this programme will nevertheless make serious inroads into the power of the big monopolies and so pave the way for and show the logic of the need for the transition to socialism;
8. Objective conditions are favourable for the establishment and development of the broad popular alliance owing to the constant encroachments by the monopolies on the interests of all non-monopoly groups in society and owing to the unity stimulated by the general threat to democracy posed by the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the monopolies.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly we have here a relatively well-developed policy the critics of which have perhaps underestimated its coherence.<sup>11</sup> We may identify three principal supports of this strategic structure. These are, *first*, the conception of a *broad popular alliance*—i.e. a social-political bloc uniting all non-monopoly classes in society against the big monopolists; *second*, the conception of labour-communist unity, with the left having won power in the Labour Party, as the political-institutional basis of the broad popular alliance; and third, the conception of a *parliamentary transition* to socialism as the key to the seizure of state power by the working class.

<sup>6</sup> NRS, pp. 18, 27 and 48.

<sup>7</sup> NRS, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> NRS, pp. 28 and 46. This programme also includes a foreign policy to promote peace and national independence.

<sup>9</sup> Thus, 'a great popular movement can develop for new policies and priorities and for ending state monopoly capitalism; *and can pave the way for the transition to socialism*'. (p. 29) (my italics); and 'It is necessary and possible to build a broad popular alliance . . . for a democratic programme that leads in the direction of socialism. There are many points on which all those who stand for socialism are agreed, but which can win a far broader support than that of committed socialists'. (p. 28).

<sup>10</sup> NRS, pp. 16, 28 and 29.

<sup>11</sup> There are, however, certain lacunae, principally relating to the role of the broad popular alliance which is expected to be so crucial in preparing the way for the establishment of working-class power. It is not, for example, clear what is the difference between the programme of the broad popular alliance and that of the socialist government, which indeed appear to be almost indistinguishable, in part a consequence of the fact that socialism is nowhere defined. (Compare Chapters 3 and 4). Nor is it clear if the programme of the broad popular alliance is expected to be embodied in the accession to power of a popular government, although this seems to be implied by the inroads which it is expected the anti-monopoly alliance will make into monopoly power. (See, especially, pp. 29 and 31).

Our whole strategy has been based upon a double-barrelled socio-economic thesis which for some reason is treated as axiomatic and which cannot boast of even one piece of serious research to sustain it—that the socio-economic interests of all classes in society other than the big monopolists are antagonistic to those of the big monopolists and that therefore an alliance of these classes can be formed against the monopolists.<sup>12</sup>

As a preliminary we may note that the totally un-Marxist agglomeration of social groupings which the *British Road to Socialism* specifies as the constituents of the anti-monopoly alliance is such as to obscure the crucial problems of class antagonisms and class alliances. Among the categories listed are, for example, 'housewives', 'owner occupiers', 'producers and consumers', 'students'.<sup>13</sup> Having said this we must note *both* that since we are lacking in the necessary research a definitive critique cannot yet be made; *and* that there are sound *a priori* grounds nevertheless for posing the question as to whether or not there are significant non-monopoly classes and sections of classes whose immediate interests lie with the maintenance of the existing system and/or directly in alliance with the large monopolists. This is likely to be the case, for example, with important sections of small business<sup>14</sup> whose profitable survival depends on a symbiotic relationship with the larger firms. Similarly, the larger farmers (and perhaps the smaller) and major sections of the professionally employed—especially doctors, dentists, lawyers, solicitors and accountants, are likely to see their interests as firmly tied to the existing system. Even more important, perhaps, the mere fact of conflicts of interest between, say, small business men in general, small shopkeepers, lesser farmers, etc, on the one side and large monopolists on the other, does not by itself rule out the possibility of much sharper and more deep-rooted antagonisms between the former groups and the working class.<sup>15</sup> Nor can it be assumed in turn that the immediate socio-economic interests of the working class necessarily tend to deploy them alongside various sections of the petit bourgeoisie against the monopolies. On the contrary, there is good reason to believe, for example, that the elimination of the small shop-

<sup>12</sup> 'The programme which we put forward unites the interests of the working class with those of virtually all sections of the people outside big business', *mas*, p. 16. See also pp. 27 and 28-29.

<sup>13</sup> It will be noticed that not one of these is a class category. One wonders how Marx would have analysed the category 'producers and consumers'. On page 35, another list of anti-monopoly classes refers, without qualification, to 'farmers', rather as if capitalism had not yet penetrated the British countryside.

<sup>14</sup> In his speech to the 31st Congress of the CPGB John Gollan included "small capitalists" in the list of candidates for the anti-monopoly alliance.

<sup>15</sup> Superficially, the picture of every group in society wanting something which the monopolist state is unwilling to give them appears to accord with both reality and the concept of the anti-monopoly alliance. It by no means follows, however, that these classes who 'want more' will be prepared to ally with the working class and indeed may well see their prospects of improvement depend upon the capitalist state taking action *against* the working class e.g. by urging government action against inflation. At any one time, *everyone* wants something more from the government than it is currently getting, including the Federation of British Industry. But this does not constitute the basis of an alliance.

keeper by the supermarket constitutes an all-round blessing for the working-class housewife.

The crucial importance of these considerations is not to suggest a dismissal of the problem of class alliances but to focus attention on the unscientific approach to the problem adopted in the *British Road to Socialism*. For the point is that the anti-monopoly alliance there posited is based in the first place on the mechanical collation and running-together of the various immediate demands of all sections of the population other than the big monopolies.<sup>16</sup> But such a summation of the immediate demands of all non-monopoly classes cannot form the basis of a stable alliance for a number of reasons. First, some of these demands must be in conflict with one another, despite fantastic day-dreams of plenty for all by taxing the rich, reducing arms expenditure and nationalizing various industries.<sup>17</sup> Second, were such an alliance ever to achieve a parliamentary majority, it would, like a badly constructed gun, be likely to blow up in the face of the revolutionary movement since, on achieving 'power', it would at once exhibit profound disintegratory tendencies with the various non-monopoly classes struggling for the spoils. Third, a popular or socialist government achieving a parliamentary majority on such a self-contradictory programme of unrealizable demands would inevitably find itself faced with an economic crisis but with neither the economic nor the political strategy to deal with it, thus opening the way for successful reactionary counter-attack.

Even apart from the inherent weaknesses of such an alliance when embodied in a parliamentary majority, there must be serious doubts whether such a programme as the *British Road to Socialism* advances could ever result in a parliamentary majority (quite apart from a class alliance<sup>18</sup>) since a coherent economic programme for a popular democratic government would certainly not be one constructed from the summation of the demands of disparate groups but would inevitably be a programme which harmed the immediate interests of various non-monopoly groups. Moreover, if the kind of economic programme which is generated by the conception of an anti-monopoly alliance is bound to be non-coherent and therefore impractical, this is unlikely to escape the electors whose understanding of economics is more sophisticated than the Party commonly realizes. In other words, the question, 'Who will pay for it all?' cannot be avoided by vague reference to unspecified but large productivity gains resulting from the wondrous application of modern science and technology to newly nationalized industries.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> BRS, pp. 28-29; 34-35; 42-46. One aspect of this unscientific approach is the failure to distinguish between temporary, tactical alliances, perhaps over specific issues, and the kind of strategic, longer-term class alliances envisaged in the connection of, for example, an anti-capitalist bloc of workers and intellectuals.

<sup>17</sup> BRS, pp. 31-33.

<sup>18</sup> It should not be necessary to point out that a parliamentary majority by no means necessarily implies a class alliance of the non-monopoly groups.

<sup>19</sup> BRS, pp. 3, 32, and 57-60 for various Utopian descriptions of the benefits of planning and nationalization.

Despite all this, there is specified, in the *British Road to Socialism*, a strategic link which in principle transcends the immediate interests of the various non-monopoly groups and reintegrates them at a higher level. This is the issue of democracy. There are two aspects to this in the strategy—the first is the defence and extension of democracy during the struggle under capitalism; and the second is the positing of socialist democracy as a long-term perspective illuminating the way ahead.

Unfortunately, however, there are strong reasons to doubt if the struggle for democracy as conceived in the *British Road to Socialism* can become the strategic binding link between the various sectors of struggle. This is because the conception advanced is that of the struggle for the defence and extension of existing forms of democracy, i.e. of bourgeois or liberal democracy—and for various reasons, outlined below, this cannot constitute an adequate strategy. Thus it is unambiguously stated that 'what is needed is the continuous use and development of the traditional democratic means of struggle';<sup>20</sup> and in the chapter of the *British Road to Socialism* discussing the anti-monopoly alliance the relevant section is headed 'Defence and Extension of Democratic Rights' and the conception of a new kind of democracy (however primitive in its manifestation under capitalism) is totally lacking. Not a single one of the specific reforms proposed as part of the programme of the broad popular alliance goes beyond the bounds of a very mild liberal democratic approach.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps most revealing are the proposals for the 'popular control' of the mass media which—proposing that 'the movement should demand the setting up of a national council with representatives of the main democratic organizations to review programmes, put forward proposals and influence policy'<sup>22</sup>—is not in fact a proposal for popular control at all.

Nor, more significantly, do the characteristics of socialist democracy<sup>23</sup> as outlined in the *British Road to Socialism*, appear to differ significantly from those of some version or other of liberal democracy. Thus, socialist democracy is to be characterized by a multi-party system with democratically organized political parties, proportional representation, socialists in the state apparatus, Welsh and Scottish parliaments, and a more important role for the trade unions.<sup>24</sup> No extensive critique is needed to show that, however desirable some of these measures may be in themselves, they do not, either singly or *in toto*, constitute a qualitatively different kind of democratic structure from that experienced under liberal capitalism. The apparent exception to this, the advocacy of industrial democracy, is not even, as outlined in the *British Road to Socialism*, control by the producers at the point of production, far less

<sup>20</sup> p. 29, my italics.

<sup>21</sup> BRS pp. 39–42. These include the right to strike (already won), legislation to prevent newspaper mergers, abolition of the House of Lords, Scottish and Welsh parliaments, etc.

<sup>22</sup> BRS, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> As distinct from proposals to extend democracy in the programme of the anti-monopoly alliance.

<sup>24</sup> BRS, pp. 52–56, 61–62.

the utilization of control at the point of production as a basis for direct control of the state itself by the producers. One is inevitably led to wonder if the drafters of the *British Road to Socialism* consider that the only difference in principle between capitalist and socialist democracy is that the latter is based on common ownership of the means of production whereas the former is not.<sup>25</sup>

## V

The emphasis placed in the *British Road to Socialism* on the struggle for the defence and extension of bourgeois parliamentary democracy as a central strategic focus is justified by the thesis that the monopolies are attacking democracy as we know it. Thus it is argued that 'modern monopoly capitalism attacks all the essential rights and liberties that have been won over many years of struggle by the working people. In the years before the Second World War the attack on democracy took the form of open fascism. Today in different conditions it takes different forms. But as the crisis of the political system and of democracy deepens, the drive to dictatorial rule is growing in many countries. In Britain, Parliament is by-passed more and more as the power of the executive grows. The very conception of parliamentary democracy is under fire as the call is made for coalition government or rule by businessmen. There are increasing encroachments on the powers of local authorities'.<sup>26</sup>

Even were this an accurate characterization of current political trends, it would imply that we were adopting a fundamentally *defensive* strategy, i.e. protecting liberal democracy which is constantly menaced. However, the passage quoted above is not at all an accurate characterization of current political trends. Parliamentary democracy is *not* under attack—on the contrary, the political structures of bourgeois parliamentary democracy in Britain are as stable as ever except in so far as an increasing popular disillusion with Parliament represents a primitive but accurate comprehension that bourgeois democracy is not genuine democracy. Indeed the point is worth making that it is this which worries reaction. Reaction is concerned *not to attack* the bourgeois parliamentary system but *to re-establish faith in it*. Nor is there anything new about Parliament being by-passed by the executive. Parliament has always been by-passed since it is not a decision-making body and never has been since the development of universal franchise. The decisions are taken elsewhere and Parliament ratifies them. To describe Parliament as 'the supreme organ of representative power' as does the *British Road to Socialism* (p. 48) is thus a complete surrender to bourgeois ideology. Again, the call for a business government, which in any case has died away, was of no great significance and simply represented the view of a few cranks dissatisfied with the repeated

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<sup>25</sup> No doubt unintentionally, some substance is giving to this view by the exhortation on p. 10 that 'Capitalist democracy must become socialist democracy'.

<sup>26</sup> BRS, p. 10.

failure of both Tory and Labour Governments to solve the economic problems of British capitalism. Equally unimportant was the call for coalition government which has also died away and which in any case is not in the least incompatible with parliamentary democracy as we know from various past experiences of coalition government. Finally, the encroachments on the powers of local authorities arise not from any policy on the part of the big monopolies but simply from the increasing complexity of modern social and economic life.

It should not be necessary to underline the obvious—that British capitalism has been concerned to *strengthen* the parliamentary system rather than threaten it. However, if there has been no attack on parliamentary democracy it has nevertheless become increasingly obvious that Parliament is losing credibility. And this is not because it has become less democratic. It is because while the system is as formally democratic and as actually undemocratic as ever, the capitalist state, in the conditions of managed capitalism, is engaged in *doing* more than ever, so that the contradiction between the formal role of parliament and the reality is becoming more and more blatant.

Indeed, why *should* the monopolies attack Parliament when Parliament is serving them perfectly well? Parliament is a part of their 'own' bourgeois state with its own particular functions in maintaining bourgeois hegemony. These functions have been to clothe bourgeois rule in the garments of democratic legitimacy; to give advance warning of accumulating social discontents; to act as a safety valve for the release of these discontents; and, in conjunction with the electoral system of which Parliament is the apex, to facilitate the smooth change of top personnel in the capitalist state which lends it flexibility.<sup>27</sup> In the light of these considerations, it becomes absurd to speak of the transformation of Parliament into an instrument of the peoples' will since this is to demand that it acquire a role it has never had and cannot achieve because its internal structure and articulation with the rest of the political and state structures of British capitalism make it an institution the functions of which are totally distinct from those of policy-making.<sup>28</sup>

None of this, of course, is to argue that bourgeois democracy should not be defended against any attacks that may be made on it. Nor is it to argue that the question of democracy does not have a central strategic significance. The defence of bourgeois parliamentary democracy is necessary to provide the most propitious conditions for the struggle but it can never be a substitute for the struggle for a *new kind of*

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<sup>27</sup> The performance of the last genuinely useful technical function for capitalism in such a way as to involve the masses in the process is of course what gives the Parliamentary electoral system its credibility. The electoral system is by no means simply a sham but this implies neither that it or Parliament is an instrument of the people's will nor that Parliament as such is actually sovereign or a policy-making body.

<sup>28</sup> Of course, one could conceive of a genuine organ of popular power which did take decisions and one could call it a parliament but the relationship of such a body to what we now know as parliament would be a purely nominal one.

*democracy*. Again, in conditions of increasing control of the economy and political life by the capitalist state it is clear that the *British Road to Socialism* is correct to focus on democracy as the central strategic link of the various struggles. But while in this case the priority is right the content is wrong and represents a surrender to bourgeois liberalism. The strategic focus must be on democracy but on a democracy transcending bourgeois parliamentarism—a democracy of control from below based on the workplace.<sup>29</sup>

## VI

Concluding our discussion of the anti-monopoly alliance, the necessity arises of querying not simply the strategy but the term itself. Since monopoly capitalism is a characterization of the mode of production of the national economy in the 20th century, there is no sense in which an anti-monopoly struggle differs from a struggle against the capitalist system as such.<sup>30</sup> However, it appears to be the case that those who use this term feel that an anti-monopoly struggle has characteristics different from those of a directly anti-capitalist, i.e. socialist struggle, since they consider the former will rally broader sections of the population to struggle under its banner. An attempt is made to resolve this internal contradiction within the anti-monopoly alliance concept by drawing analogies with the anti-fascist struggles of the 1930's—both fascism and the monopolies being characterized as enemies of bourgeois parliamentary democracy.<sup>31</sup>

This analogy cannot be sustained since fascism is *one* possible *political structure* of modern capitalism whereas the monopolies are the *only* possible dominant *mode of production* of every national capitalist economy. The monopolies *are* capitalism at the production level. As such why should they object to parliamentary democracy which is the *typical* political structure of modern capitalism? Circumstances have arisen in other countries in which this structure has failed capitalism but no-one can seriously argue this to have been the case in Britain at any time in this century. On the contrary, this structure has served to legitimize time and again *real* invasions of the human rights of the British working class by the capitalist state and the monopolies—as even now it has recently been serving and will serve again to legitimize attempted and actual curbs on the powers of the trade unions.

The wishful thinking which conceives of the big monopolies as threatening the bourgeois parliamentary system is only one step away from the view that these monopolies also threaten the neutrality and

<sup>29</sup> This somewhat bald statement is not intended to imply that the problem is a simple one. Indeed it may take many decades to solve. Rather it is a statement of the *analytically necessary* starting point for action and theory.

<sup>30</sup> Despite the misleading terminology we may dismiss the possibility that what is intended by an anti-monopoly policy is a reversion to a more competitive capitalist economy.

<sup>31</sup> BRS, p. 10.



independence of the state.<sup>32</sup> The working class and 'democratic forces' can then be depicted as exerting pressures to counteract that of the monopolies and maintain the independence of the state. This drama easily slips into a final act in which the working class and its allies exert sufficient pressure on the state via a parliamentary election to bend it in the direction of socialism. The big monopolies, abandoned by their craven state, are nationalized.<sup>33</sup>

Parliament is, however, a part of the state and the monopolies menace neither Parliament nor the other parts of the state. On the contrary, the bourgeois state now exercises greater powers over the big firms *in the interests of the system as a whole* than ever before in the history of capitalism.

## VII

Turning to the conception of labour-communist unity as the political basis of the anti-monopoly alliance, we may first note that this is in essence an approach to the masses *from above* and indirectly through the instrumentality of bureaucratic institutions, structurally adapted to operating through the normal channels of capitalism, i.e. the Labour Party and the trade unions.<sup>34</sup> The labour-communist alliance is seen as the key to achieving a united labour movement (itself the core of the anti-monopoly alliance) and once a united labour movement has been achieved the potential power of that movement can be brought into play. Here the labour movement *is defined in* terms of organizations (i.e. the Communist Party, the Labour Party, the trade unions and the co-operatives) and is not united as a result of creative and energetic mass struggle but—precisely the reverse—the unity of the labour movement creates the mass Marxist struggle.<sup>35</sup> This is a misunderstanding of the

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<sup>32</sup> 'The super trusts not only dominate the government, they are in effect a government within the government. They dominate all the economic departments.' J. Gollan, Speech moving the resolution on 'The monopolies, left unity and the Communist Party', *Communist*, Nov. 29th, 1969, p. 759.

<sup>33</sup> Of course, the BRS nowhere argues that the state is neutral and independent. What is here being argued is that the concept of an anti-monopoly alliance together with that of a parliamentary transition to socialism *necessarily* (i.e. as a matter of logic) implies a state potentially independent of class interests.

<sup>34</sup> There is, however, a crucial difference between the Labour Party and the trade unions. The Labour Party is actively concerned to promote the efficient operation of the capitalist system. The trade unions, on the other hand, are and will remain the organs of the workers' economic struggle. That is the condition of their survival.

<sup>35</sup> BRS, p. 18. 'In this process of struggle over many decades millions-strong unions and co-operatives have been built up; and political parties—the Labour Party and the Communist Party—have been established to advance the interests of the working class. These organizations together form the organized labour movement which is today a powerful force, capable, if united, of rallying the people for their immediate demands against the monopoly capitalists . . .'; also, (p. 19) 'The potential strength of the movement has never been exerted for socialist aims because . . . dominant positions have been held by right-wing leaders.' It is no doubt this 'approach from above' that accounts for the remarkable statement that 'The struggle for the unity of the working class is no mere tactical question. It is a matter of principle.' BRS, p. 21. Matters of principle may well demand a *split* in the working-class movement, e.g. over voting for a racist and imperialist Labour Government.

conception of the role of leadership—the more specially when the organizations constituting the so-called labour movement—with the exception of the Communist Party—are and have been for years integrated into a capitalist system to varying degrees and structurally adapted to operating ‘constitutionally’ within it. Indeed, it was with such considerations in mind that both Lenin and Gramsci addressed themselves to the problem of how best to encourage those forms of working-class activity which would at once circumvent and transcend the bureaucratic rigidities and economistic limitations of trade unionism—thus the importance attached by Lenin to Soviets’ and by Gramsci to Workers’ Councils. This again, as with the defence of bourgeois democracy, is not to call for the neglect or destruction of the trade unions but rather to relegate trade union struggle to the secondary position where it belongs.

Crucial for the postulated unity of the labour movement is the victory of the left in the Labour Party. The arguments generally deployed to substantiate the view that this is possible are broadly that the Labour Party has a working class base; that it is in principle a socialist party; and is integrally linked to the trade unions. That the left has thus far failed to win leadership is attributed to the domination of right-wing ideas spread by right-wing leaders.

These arguments cannot be dealt with fully here. Suffice it to say that far from being a potentially socialist party, the Labour Party is a *structure for fighting elections to provide personnel to run the capitalist state at national and local levels in such a way as to integrate the most advanced sections of the working class into the capitalist system*. Further, the provision of such personnel has as a quid pro quo a local and national system of institutionalized patronage. Nor is it only a small number of leaders who are right wing—the party down to its lowest levels is predominantly right wing. Neither is the Labour Party democratic since the Government or the Parliamentary Labour Party decides policy. Moreover, the Labour Party operates at all levels to dampen the class struggle as far as this manifests itself in the form of direct action and initiative from below. The role of the Labour left has been to maintain the Labour Party’s hegemony over the class-conscious sections of the working class and in doing so it provides necessary ideological support to maintain the electoral success which ensures the continued dominance of the right<sup>36</sup>. A mass movement cannot change the Labour Party *except by destroying it*. The strategic task of the revolutionary left is thus not to *change* the Labour Party but to detach from its working-class support.

<sup>36</sup> It is in its policy towards the Labour left and the Labour Party in general that the internal contradictions of the Communist Party’s Parliamentarianism emerge most clearly. For by encouraging the most advanced sections of the workers and professional people in the belief that the Labour Party is a potentially socialist party and that the Labour left is or can be an effective force which one day can control the Labour Party and can thereby move it towards socialism, the Communist Party thereby *strengthens* the very forces within the Labour Party which keep the most class-conscious workers tied to it and whose detachment from it is the necessary condition for electoral success of a Marxist party in Britain—and electoral activity, provided it is relegated to a subordinate position in socialist strategy, has its place. Our policy towards the Labour Party and especially the Labour left is the premise for continued and pathetic electoral failure.

The experience of social democratic parties in various continental European countries in the postwar period, as well as in Britain itself bears out this analysis, e.g. in Italy, West Germany, Finland and Belgium. In all these cases, the social democratic parties have participated in government and have invariably attempted to fulfil two functions: first to integrate the working class and the trade unions into the 'managed capitalism' of the postwar world; second to provide a more efficient management for postwar capitalism than traditional right-wing parties were able to do, dogged as they often were by past prejudices, inhibitions and supporters. In no case, and this is the crucial point, have these experiences resulted in any significant leftward shift in the parties concerned in revulsion against these policies—with one partial exception—their trade union allies and supporters. This exception, however, arises not from any difference over socialist principles but primarily from the fact that the trade union movement sees in wage policies—themselves an integral weapon in the armory of managed capitalism—a threat to its very existence as a set of independent institutions. In Britain, the most notable feature of the situation is the failure of the trade union resistance to achieve any substantial measure of increased support within the Parliamentary Labour Party and the constituency parties,<sup>37</sup> and the more general failure of the left within the Labour Party, after five years of the most reactionary rule Britain has undergone postwar from any government, to mark any significant advance at all. The *British Road to Socialism* is thus factually incorrect in stating that the left in the Labour Party is gaining strength<sup>38</sup>—despite the vile and contemptible, not to mention inefficient, record of the racist, imperialist and anti-trade union Labour government and the expansion of the left outside the Labour Party and the Communist Party.

However, all this begs the question of the character of the 'left' in the Labour Party whom we support and hope will achieve eventual leadership of the Labour Party. We have long since ceased to provide a serious critique of this 'left' who are, of course, just as much social-democrats as their right-wing colleagues. There are, in the Labour left, genuine and courageous people who advocate socialist policies. But the difference between social-democrats and Marxists rests upon the nature of the struggle conducted by the two groups, and connected therewith the analysis of the bourgeois state—it does not depend upon 'policies'. For Marxists, the critique of social-democracy is that it limits class struggle to forms and methods which fail to *politicize* the working class, i.e. that it resists genuine initiative from below, tries to prevent the working class from attaining the understanding of its own strength which comes from stepping outside the bounds of the permitted and the normal workings of the system; and consequently social-democracy tends to limit working class understanding of the character of its enemies—an understanding which can emerge only from sharp class

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<sup>37</sup> Beyond that which already existed in a more or less impotent form and beyond the tremors caused by unprincipled electoral calculations as to the effect of a direct clash with the trade unions.

<sup>38</sup> *NRS*, p. 25.

battles. It *may* be better to have a government of left social-democrats rather than a government of right social-democrats—but we should be clear that in either case it is still a social-democratic government which brings us no nearer to socialism than a Conservative government.

If genuine left social-democrats do not have a theory which enables them to understand the nature of the capitalist state and thus of the character of the struggle required to overthrow capitalism, it is relevant to suggest that our own current failure to produce a critique of social democracy<sup>39</sup> may be because our own view of the state has moved closer to that of the social-democrats over the years, as our characterizations of parliament and of the parliamentary transition to socialism demonstrate.<sup>40</sup>

## VIII

Thus, we finally come to the question of the parliamentary transition to socialism. Our earlier discussion dealt with the longer term strategic aspect of the role of Parliament,<sup>41</sup> and we must now consider the problem of the transfer of power to the working class and the role of Parliament in this transfer.

Let us first repeat what were the classic Marxist theses concerning Parliament, i.e. that Parliament is in part a façade, to disguise the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, in part a safety valve; and in part a danger signal for capitalism. Elections and Parliament between them permit the system to reduce explosive pressures and identify the areas where reforms are necessary. Marxist *policy* towards Parliament could generally be summarized in the following terms: utilize Parliament and elections where possible as a platform; but treat parliamentary, electoral activity as a secondary form of activity, subsidiary to direct forms of class action with their superior politicizing effects; above all, at periods of revolutionary crisis regard electoral-political activity as a lower form of struggle to be used at the most as a supplement to direct class action.

Parliamentary/electoral activity was regarded as a lesser form of activity precisely because it tended to locate the struggle in the arena most suitable to the bourgeoisie, i.e. that arena which atomised the working class and turned it into a mass of individuals voting in ballot boxes.<sup>42</sup> It follows from this that to regard a mass struggle as culminating in a parliamentary majority is to adopt a strategy the effect of which

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<sup>39</sup> By contrast, the Party has produced a very lengthy critique of the ultra-left by Betty Reid.

<sup>40</sup> The gradualist approach to the achievement of working-class power, formerly regarded by us as the crucial weakness of all brands of social democracy, appears now also to have crept into our own strategy, with the two-stage approach implied by first achieving an anti-monopoly alliance *which makes inroads into capitalist power* and *then* achieves a socialist government which completes the job.

<sup>41</sup> *Vis-à-vis* the defence of parliamentary democracy.

<sup>42</sup> Instead of a collective learning its strength in action as a *collective* and advancing its ideological clarity in part as a result of this action.

would be to interrupt the development of the revolutionary crisis which alone can bring about the overthrow of capitalism.

We may ask—why do we no longer hold these former views?—and we are answered—because of our (i.e. the British) long tradition of democratic rights on the one hand, and on the other because of the changed balance of world forces.

The former argument is largely irrelevant since it in no way counters the classic theses as outlined above. The dampening effects on the development of a potentially revolutionary crisis in May and June 1968 in France of adopting a strategy of shifting the struggle on to the parliamentary/electoral plane are a convincing demonstration of the depoliticizing effects of electoralism and of the correctness of the classic theses.<sup>43</sup> As far as the changed balance of world forces in favour of world socialism is concerned,<sup>44</sup> this is to say the least a somewhat unconvincing argument, bearing in mind the counter-productive model of socialism presented to the world by the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. Of course, it could be argued that economic and military aid from the ussa might help consolidate a British socialist régime under threat from the us—but the problem here is not how to consolidate a socialist régime—it is how to get one.

However, the issue of the balance of world forces and the nature of the transition from capitalism to socialism has in any case been mis-stated in the *British Road to Socialism since a peaceful transition to socialism is there equated with a parliamentary transition*.<sup>45</sup> It is perfectly conceivable that the balance of forces within Britain and in the world in general would be such that the transfer of power would be a peaceful affair with little or no blood-letting—no more than a handful of people were killed in the Soviet revolution after all.<sup>46</sup> The crucial point is not the degree of physical violence *but the necessity for a direct confrontation with the state power*. Wise leadership and a popular movement which developed new forms of popular power able to confront capitalist state power and disarm it might with luck mean a peaceful transition.<sup>47</sup> *But this can*

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<sup>43</sup> The Gaullist electoral victory was thus not a consequence of ultra-leftism or a proof that no development of the crisis was possible in a revolutionary direction but specifically the result of electoralist strategy interrupting the tempo of the movement.

<sup>44</sup> *BRs*, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. the discussion (*BRs* pp. 48 and 49) of how the working class attains power is headed (p. 40) 'By peaceful means' but the text makes it clear that this is equated with a parliamentary transition. Moreover, and perhaps more surprising, the *BRs* equates peaceful advance to socialism with a democratic advance, thereby implying that the Cuban and Chinese revolutions were undemocratic. Thus, 'There are now in some countries possibilities of winning political power without armed struggle. Such a peaceful, democratic advance to socialism can . . . be achieved in Britain . . .'  
*BRs*, p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> The bloodshed occurred in the wars of intervention.

<sup>47</sup> Although it has to be borne in mind that all successful revolutions to date, with one exception, that of Cuba, have benefited from the fact that world war accomplished the task of smashing or seriously wrecking the capitalist state. This is unlikely to recur and thus a heavier burden is placed on the shoulders of the revolutionary forces.

*never be equated with a parliamentary transition*, the conception of which is a recipe for impotence and retreat.

Nor is the above argument in any way negated by the formulation that mass struggle and parliamentary struggle are complementary—not alternative—forms of struggle,<sup>48</sup> since no-one is concerned to deny this. What this formulation does not clarify is *the location within the general field of strategy* of parliamentary struggle. More specifically, no one denies the necessity of mass struggle. What is at stake is the problem of how the mass struggle is to bring about a breach in capitalist state power, and the *British Road to Socialism* proposes a strategy in which the breach in capitalist state power occurs via the election of a parliamentary majority pledged to socialism—which *then*, i.e. *after* election, breaks capitalist state power. However, as already pointed out, such a strategy of necessity suffers from the debilitating effects which electoralism has on the development of the revolutionary crisis which is itself indispensable for the popular mobilization which alone can defeat capitalism. Equally crucial, this strategy fails to tackle the problem of the counter-revolutionary activities of the capitalist state *since no alternative organs of popular power will have been established*. Instead, to deal with this problem all that is left is parliamentary decrees, backed up, no doubt, by “powerful” demonstrations as in Greece before the military coup—and no doubt equally as effective.

## IX

There are thus three major cornerstones of the edifice of the *British Road to Socialism*—the anti-monopoly alliance; the unity of the Communist Party and a left-dominated Labour Party; and the parliamentary transition to socialism, all of which exhibit, on careful examination, grave weaknesses. These weaknesses relate respectively to the characteristics and analysis of the class contradictions within British society; the characterization of the Labour Party and of social democracy in general and left social democracy in particular, together with the relationship between mass movements and institutions in the revolutionary process; and the nature of the capitalist state, including Parliament, with the implications this has for the development of revolutionary crisis and its successful culmination.

Only in struggle can a new strategy be evolved but certain elements of one can already be identified. The most general political-economic contradiction in modern capitalism is that between the increasing role of the state in the economy and social and political life generally on the one hand, and the structures of formal political democracy on the other—a contradiction which puts the question of democracy on the order of the day. However the struggle for democracy must be the struggle for a new kind of democracy since liberal democracy is dying—not from external attack by monopolists but because the development of

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<sup>48</sup> *RRS*, pp. 40–49.

capitalism is steady undermining the plausibility of bourgeois political democracy. Not only this, but the defence of liberal democracy is incapable of *prefiguring in practice* the socialist vision and thus of supplying the integrating link which transforms the struggle from contestations against capitalism to efforts to achieve socialism. In other words what is required is a struggle for an alternative form of democracy based on a revival of the concept of dual power, i.e. an alternative form of popular power based on control from below necessary both for the success of the struggle against capitalism and the genuinely creative development of socialism.

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## Revolutionary Perspectives for Pakistan

Tariq Ali

The revolutionary upsurge which erupted in both parts of Pakistan from October 1968 to March 1969 and which resulted in the overthrow of the dictator Ayub, marks a turning point in the history of the Indo-Pak sub-continent. It shows quite clearly that despite the siege mentality of Pakistani politics (the fear of Communist 'invasion' in the cold war years, the threat of India, etc) the masses have succeeded in breaking through the ideological straightjacket in which they had been confined since the coup of October 1958.

What began initially as a student revolt and a revolt which for the first two months was sustained *only* by the heroism and determination of the Pakistani student movement, later enveloped the lower petty bourgeoisie and finally brought into play on a nationwide level the growing strength of the urban proletariat. The main feature of the upsurge was its spontaneity, and despite the fact that there had been a foretaste of this spontaneous working-class militancy during the 1966 railway-workers' strike, the wildness with which the new upsurge burst on the Pakistani political scene took the established 'left' parties completely by surprise. For the first few weeks the latter refused to intervene and dismissed the revolt as just another student struggle which would be crushed by the dictatorship with ease. There is reason to believe that the ruling class, too, was harbouring the same misapprehension. In all fairness it should also be mentioned that the student movement itself was not aware during the first phase of the struggle of the forces it had set into motion. It was only after the December Incidents, when a student call for a General Strike in some urban centres met with an immediate and total response from the workers, that the more conscious elements began to realize the real strength of the movement they had detonated.

The upsurge spread like fire and engulfed every single urban centre in Pakistan. In West Pakistan many small towns which had been thought to be politically insignificant now showed their mettle for the first time as the urban masses battled with the police and attacked private property. The joint student-worker battles with the army and police, factory occupations, *gherars*, the winning of unbelievably high wage demands by the workers and the possibility of dual power in some cities was not enough even to pose the question of a seizure of state power or to lead to an effective dual power situation. The main reason for this was the lack of a revolutionary vanguard party or even of small revolutionary groups of the sort which existed in France in May 1968, in Mexico in October 1968 and in Argentina at the beginning of 1969. For one whole week the structure of authority in Dacca, the capital city of East Pakistan, had completely collapsed. All initiative lay in the hands of the Students Action Committee (SAC). Instead of mobilizing the masses and starting to implement some of its 11-point demands or at least posing the question of their implementation, instead of declaring Dacca a liberated city, the SAC took over the role of the bourgeois state and its main triumph was to prevent the disruption of the cricket Test match between Pakistan and the MCC. No effort was made by any grouping to set up a People's Council to govern the city with representatives from SAC, the Peasant Associations and the factories. The latter was clearly a possibility, as many militants admitted in private discussions afterwards, and if steps had been taken in that direction it would have transformed the situation overnight, so that when the bourgeois parties united under the framework of DAC (Democratic Action Committee) to start negotiating with Ayub, a People's Council would have been the alternative present to the masses.

Despite the absence of revolutionary parties, there can be no doubt that the five-month upsurge represented a major step forward for the toiling masses in Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> It produced a growing feeling of self-confidence among the masses and a realization of their own strength. This leap of consciousness enabled the masses, in particular the industrial working class, to continue their struggle for better working conditions and higher wages after the upsurge had been halted by the imposition of Martial Law and the take-over of power by the Army C-in-C, General Yahya Khan. Despite stringent military regulations banning strikes, there has been a continuation of the strike wave in both parts of the country since March 1969 which continues to the present time. Again the most startling aspect of the strike wave has been its spontaneity: the trade-union movement in Pakistan is extremely weak and the bulk of the official trade-union 'leaders' are either in the pay of the government or the bosses, and sometimes receive money from both. This has led to a great and spontaneous militancy at factory level. Despite the fact that workers have been shot dead by police during lockouts or that their leaders have been imprisoned and whipped, the government has been unable to halt the strike wave. And it was

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the material contained in this article is taken from my forthcoming book: *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power?* Jonathan Cape, September 1970. A more complete account of the upsurge and its consequences is contained in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

precisely in order to restrain the mass movement that the military government was forced to offer concessions such as the promised General Election for October 1970 (which has been postponed to December 'because of the floods in East Pakistan') on the basis of adult franchise. There can be no doubt that the election campaigns of the bourgeois and reformist parties have succeeded in diverting the militancy, but the ruling class is miscalculating if it imagines that a liberal-democratic régime will be able to contain the movement. The exact opposite will be the case, as the limited freedoms which any elected government will be forced to concede will give rise to an extension of political struggles and more co-ordinated factory rebellions. To visualize the future political development of Pakistan it is essential to define its historical background and the class structure of Pakistani society, which reveals the two options open to the country: gradual disintegration supervised by the United States, or socialist revolution.

### Historical Background

The state of Pakistan emerged in 1947 as a result of the combined and uneven development of two national bourgeoisies in the Indian sub-continent. But whereas the Hindu bourgeoisie was capable of creating and sustaining its own political party, the Indian Congress (a party which, despite the recent split, has succeeded in preserving and maintaining bourgeois continuity and hegemony in India since Partition), its Muslim counterparts were too weak to create their own party, and instead supported the Muslim League. The League was a feudal formation which had been created in 1906 by Muslim nobles and landowners because they felt it was necessary to 'foster a sense of loyalty to the British government among the Muslims of India'.<sup>2</sup> The feudal landlords financed the party and exercised control over it. Although the balance of forces was modified by the influx of petty-bourgeois elements in the late 'thirties, the latter could never exercise complete control, despite the abilities of their leader, Mohammed Ali Jinnah who became Pakistan's first Governor-General after independence. Jinnah's death a year after in 1948 removed the last restraint from the landlords. The Muslim masses, who had been beguiled by slogans of 'paradise on earth' during the struggle for Pakistan, saw that it was the Muslim landlords who had acquired a country.

From 1948-58 Pakistan witnessed a decade of 'parliamentary government', but without a single General Election. The most important development was the complete disintegration of the Muslim League in the provincial elections in East Pakistan in 1954, where a League majority was smashed by a United Front opposition which won 300 seats out of 310. The defeat of the League in the East was followed by a growing anti-feudal movement in the West and it was becoming clear that a General Election might result in a government not firmly committed to United States imperialism. It was to forestall such an election that General Ayub seized power in October 1958. Given the class nature of the army and the social background of the officer élite a 'Nasserite' direction was ruled out from the first day of military

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in: *The Political System of Pakistan*, M. Sayeed (oup).

dictatorship. From 1958 to 1968 there was no generalized challenge to Ayub's power. The propaganda machine of the Ayub régime both internally and externally (mainly via *The Times* and *The Guardian*) presented a picture of glowing economic progress, reform, stability, etc. It is therefore only essential to study the class structure of Pakistani society to see that nothing much changed during the decade of darkness.

## 1. CLASS STRUCTURE OF WEST PAKISTAN

West Pakistan consists of four provinces, Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

### The Countryside

*The Landlords.* The landlords in the Indian sub-continent were largely a creation of British imperialism, in a situation where previously the land had either been owned by village communities or in the possession of the tiller. It is not surprising that the feudal landlords have been the most subservient and servile defenders of British imperialism<sup>3</sup>. In Pakistan today they represent the most reactionary and backward element, and whilst their loyalty has usually remained with the Muslim League or the various rump parties which have emerged from it, this has not prevented them from transferring it to the Army when the occasion demanded it. The so-called land reforms which were carried out by the Ayub régime and were hailed as a 'landmark' by the British press, in fact left intact the entire system of feudal relationships in the countryside. Only 1.6 per cent of the cultivable land was redistributed, so it is not surprising that the 'land reform' was welcomed by all the leading landlords once they had experienced its implementation.

The big landlords today are those who own more than 100 acres of cultivable land. According to the 1963 Agricultural Census, they number 63,348, and between them own over 15 million acres of land, which constitutes 31.2 per cent of the total land under private ownership. The big landlords represent 1.25 per cent of the total number of landowners, and of these 0.12 per cent (just under 6000 landlords) own 11.5 per cent of the total area. The politics of the provinces which comprise Western Pakistan are dominated by these landlords, and the different political parties spend a lot of their time trying to win them over in order to ensure an equitable distribution of seats in the countryside, where 75.5 per cent of the population lives. While the grip of the landlords over the cities has been broken over the last few years by the growing petty bourgeoisie and the deepening maturity of the proletariat, it is still likely that the landlords will dominate West Pakistani politics after the 1970 general election.

*Rich Peasants.* The Pakistani kulaks own land varying between 25 and 100 acres, and number 286,470. The area owned by them amounts to just over 10 million acres, or 21.9 per cent of the total. These are the forces of the rural bourgeoisie, and while they undoubtedly nurture a

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<sup>3</sup> An excellent account of the development of feudalism in India is available in a book now out of print: *India Today* by R. P. Dutt.

resentment against the big landlords, they will never join hands with the poor peasants or peasant-proprietors in a struggle against the feudal order. In a situation where the peasant movement shows signs of developing they might give verbal support to avoid being isolated, but they pin their hopes on the bourgeois parties gradually transforming and bourgeoisifying the countryside. Until now they have been politically subservient to the big landlords, and it will need a strong bourgeois party to win them away from feudalism. They comprise in the countryside the bulk of the upper petty bourgeoisie; they are the moneylenders dreaded by every poor peasant, and while they work on their own land, they use their profits to hire landless labourers to work for them, thus helping to increase their surplus which enables them to buy more land.

*Middle Peasants.* The middle peasants own between 5 and 25 acres. The total area under their control is 15,438,138 acres, which represents 31.7 per cent of the total. However, the statistics do not reveal the percentage of land which is uncultivable or without water supply; in fact, a large proportion of the land is as good as useless, and the real statistics have yet to be worked out. In most cases the middle peasants are self-supporting, but the existing economic conditions make this an extremely hard grind, and they are constantly forced to work harder to earn the same money. In times of crisis they may be forced to sell their land to the rich peasant and either move to the cities or become landless labourers. Their experience forces them to be hostile to the rich, but before they join any radical movement they have to be convinced of its partial success, because in the case of failure they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. In any case they are not hostile to anti-feudal movements.

*Poor Peasants.* This category of peasants owns less than five acres of land. They number 3,266,137 and constitute 64.4 per cent of the total owners, but the total area under their ownership is just over 7 million acres or 15.25 per cent of the total. If a further division is made of these statistics, a figure emerges of 742,216 peasants who own less than one acre of land, and as a result have to sell part of their labour to middle or rich peasants in order to stave off starvation. The figure does not include the families of these peasants, and even an extremely optimistic estimate would multiply it by three. These semi-proletarian peasants should be discussed in conjunction with the peasants in the next category.

*Poor Peasants/Sharecroppers/Rural Proletarians.* There are over 2½ million landless peasants in West Pakistan who are tenant-sharecroppers and who cultivate over half of the cultivated land in the province. The best part (half or sometimes even as much as three-quarters) of the share is expropriated by the landlord, and the remainder is sometimes used by the peasant to feed his family and sometimes sold at the local market. The rights of these tenant-peasants are virtually non-existent. The local police are in most cases on the payroll of the local landlord and readily comply with the latter's request to eject 'troublesome' peasants. Despite the oppression, the tenant-peasant lives in a 'paradise' compared with the rural proletarian. The

latter has no land at all. He is compelled to work for big landlords and rich peasants. His existence is that of a slave, a serf. The money he earns (he may sometimes be paid in produce) is barely enough to feed himself or his family. He has no rights and works 112 hours a week. There are over a million landless labourers in West Pakistan and their number is slowly growing, with the increase of dispossessed tenants. These are the peasants who will form the backbone of any peasant rebellion. The suppressed anger which they contain in their hearts will one day burst forth with a fury which neither the landlords nor their supporters in the army will be able to contain. It will even make the violent rebellions of the Chinese peasantry look like 'dinner parties'. These poor peasants will play a key role in the coming Pakistani revolution and only they, together with their proletarian brothers in the cities, will be capable of ending the feudal order in the countryside.

### The Towns

*The National Bourgeoisie.* The main characteristic of the Pakistani bourgeoisie is its relative inexperience, as it came into its own only after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. Politically it was not strong enough to form its own party and in the pre-Pakistan period always relied on the Muslim League. After the Partition it saw the growing disintegration of the League, and hitched its star firmly to the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP). The latter has therefore openly played the role of acting on behalf of the Pakistani bourgeoisie, with the result that the latter has never really felt the need to set up its own political party. Its interests have always been well defended.

It is somewhat of an anomaly to refer to the Pakistani bourgeoisie as 'national' in any meaningful sense of the word. They are tied to American finance-capital and also to British capital. While the near-monopoly positions of the big businessmen enabled them to obtain well over 100 per cent profits, their links to and dependence in relation to foreign capital were an essential pre-requisite for this 'economic miracle'. The dependence on foreign capital has been increasing over the last decade. Total capital imports have increased by 100 per cent from 1955 to 1965 and the projected increase for 1965-70 was given as another 100 per cent. Also 32 per cent of the development expenditure is entirely dependent on foreign aid which can be used only in 'consultation with' us economic advisers (the civilian version of the 'advisers' currently engaged in Indo-China). By 1968 the chief economist of the Pakistan Planning Commission revealed that 22 leading industrialists controlled 66 per cent of the industrial assets of the country, 70 per cent of insurance and 80 per cent of banking interests. At the same time 25 per cent of the total labour force was unemployed (including seasonal unemployment).

While there has undoubtedly been an increase in the rate of industrialization, this has *not* resulted in an increase in the standard of living for 90 per cent of the population of Pakistan. The industrialization has been supervised by the givers of foreign aid and has been accompanied by tax exemptions, tariff protections, export bonus schemes,

cheap government loans, etc. The Pakistani capitalist has in addition enjoyed the right to charge the highest possible price for the goods he manufactures.

This bourgeoisie is incapable even of thinking of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the countryside and to countenance any alliance with it is to betray the class interests of the workers and poor peasants. Leading members of the bourgeoisie are now beginning to support certain political parties (in particular after the 1968-69 upsurge, which shattered their complacency to a certain extent), the particular party they join depending on what they think are its chances of success in the general election. But the loyalties of the bourgeoisie as a class still lie with the Army and the Civil Service as both these groupings have proved to be the most efficient defenders of the status quo.

*The Petty Bourgeoisie.* This class is never united or cohesive. The upper petty bourgeoisie comprises small businessmen who have a hard time maintaining their small rate of profit, and like their counterparts in the countryside, are seriously affected by any economic crisis. Many of them are ruined by the costs of inflation. Others find themselves unable to find enough money to bribe the relevant civil servant in order to renew their import or export licenses. They are still determined to try and get rich and this dominates their political outlook; hence they are in most cases hostile to the revolutionary movement. They comprise the large shopkeepers, the petty bureaucrats, building contractors, the upper-section lawyers, the teachers in high-wage brackets. At a time when the upsurge was consciously adopting anti-capitalist slogans, the upper petty bourgeoisie together with the big bourgeoisie and the landlords welcomed the intervention of the Pakistan Army.

The lower petty bourgeoisie comprises the bulk of the student community in Pakistan, in addition to a majority of teachers and junior lecturers at universities, technical colleges, etc. In Pakistan they have played a progressive role and have been in the vanguard of the struggle against dictatorship. Many of them, however, tend to be satisfied with democratic demands and fail to see that only a dictatorship of the urban and rural proletariat is capable of leading the struggle for even bourgeois-democratic demands to a successful conclusion. As a class they have become extremely responsive to socialist ideas. They tend to support the 'left' political parties, as we shall see below.

*The Proletariat.* The urban proletariat, small though it may be in numbers, is a crucial part of the leadership of the revolution. It was the workers who provided the backbone of the struggle in its last phase, and it is the workers who have continued the struggle and kept up an opposition to the régime. It was the same workers who defied the taunts of the neo-fascist Jamaat-i-Islami and observed May Day 1970 throughout West Pakistan with red flags and with the slogan: *Capitalists Stand Back, Pakistan Belongs to Us!*<sup>4</sup> Despite the harsh labour laws and the 10 year wage freeze institutionalized by Ayub, the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *The Red Mole*, August 1970, article entitled: 'Pakistan; New Vultures For Old'.

Pakistani workers displayed a combativity reminiscent of the Russian workers before 1905. High unemployment, low wages and a complete lack of organization have not prevented the workers from using their own imagination and initiative and winning certain victories.

According to the last Census (1961), the total urban population had increased from 7,839,000 in 1951 to 12,255,000 ten years later—an increase of 56 per cent. In West Pakistan there was an increase from approximately 6 million to 9 million—an increase of 59.7 per cent. If one bears in mind the rapid rate of industrialization, the figure is bound to have increased considerably since then. The West Pakistani proletariat is concentrated in manufacturing industries, mining, communications and transport. The town with the largest concentration of workers is the former capital, Karachi, though the cities of Lahore and Lyallpur are developing very fast, and with the start of work at the new machine-tool centre near Rawalpindi the latter will become an extremely important area. Workers' organizations are extremely weak in West Pakistan, but this situation is being altered by the workers themselves, and a new crop of leaders is emerging, tested in class struggle, hard and uncompromising and prepared to face any oppression to defend their class interests.

## 2. EAST PAKISTAN AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The province of East Bengal, known as East Pakistan, is separated from West Pakistan by 1000 miles of Indian territory. The struggle for Pakistan in East Bengal was also a struggle by the majority of Muslim peasants against the Hindu landlords and moneylenders. The Muslim League leaders successfully used this to gain power. The province of East Pakistan has therefore only one thing in common with West Pakistan: the Islamic religion. Given the different cultural and linguistic background in Bengal, and also the vigorous tradition of revolutionary nationalism, the link was never very strong at the best of times. The economic and political subjugation of East Pakistan (which began soon after Partition) by West Pakistani landlords, civil servants and the Pakistan Army has succeeded in further weakening this tenuous link. Economically it has been non-Bengali entrepreneurs who have been allowed to become millionaires and politically the Army and Civil Service has seen to it that the Bengali majority does not get fair representation on a national scale. Whether the December 1970 general election will change matters remains to be seen.

*The Bourgeoisie.* As mentioned above the Bengali bourgeoisie has not been allowed to develop economically: instead, West Pakistani capitalists have been allowed to exploit East Bengal in a neo-colonial fashion. Much of the profits from East Pakistan have contributed to the faster rate of industrialization in West Pakistan. This situation has gone from bad to worse, and it was bound to produce a nationalist response from the Bengali petty bourgeoisie, which has a much higher level of political consciousness than its Western counterpart. This is also true historically. Bengal was without doubt the most politically conscious segment of the Indian sub-continent during the days of the Raj and it was not an exaggeration to say that 'what Bengal thinks today,



India thinks tomorrow'. Not only has the Bengali bourgeoisie been dispossessed economically, but it has never been allowed adequate representation in either the Civil Service or the armed services. For instance, the number of Bengalis in the Army is infinitesimal: this is because the ruling élite in the West does not trust the Bengalis because of their superior political culture. The rationalization is racist: the Bengalis are short and weak and not capable of fighting. The latter view is widespread in the Army and the Civil Service. Unfortunately the left forces in West Pakistan have often shared these prejudices. The Bengali middle class has its own political party—the Awami League—which is committed to some extent to reversing the existing situation.

*The Agrarian Question.* The population density in East Bengal is amongst the highest in the world and it is certainly much higher than that of West Pakistan. The pressures on the land are therefore much greater. (In West Pakistan the total surveyed area is 104 million acres; in East Bengal it is just over 21 million acres.) A limited land reform implemented in East Pakistan a few years after independence (the East Pakistan Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950) placed land ownership at a ceiling of 33 acres and abolished the role of middlemen or rent collectors. The reason for this measure was of course the fact that most of the landlords affected were Hindu landlords and it had the effect of driving them out of the country. The land obtained by this means was given to those peasants who were working on it or redistributed. Feudalism of the West Pakistan variety, therefore, does not exist in East Pakistan. What does exist in the countryside is a decaying feudalism with a strong kulak class.

The number of poor peasants is increasing fairly rapidly. The peasants owning less than 5 acres own the largest area of land (9,254,734 acres) and of this 3½ million acres are held in holdings of less than 2½ acres. Over 4 million peasants and their families come into this category. The number of tenant-sharecroppers is low compared with West Pakistan—only 100,000, while the landless labourers account for 1.4 million peasants and their families. Also there are 3.2 million peasants whose landholdings are so small that they have to work part-time as labourers in order to survive. The number of landless labourers and those owning small pieces of land is roughly equal. However, the number of landless labourers is on the increase; peasants with small landholdings are often forced to sell their land. Moreover every time a peasant dies his land is divided equally amongst his heirs and this increases the fragmentation of landholdings tenfold, making them virtually worthless. The poor peasant with a small landholding is taxed heavily by the government. He pays land tax in addition to tax on every commodity he produces, including even the small mud hut he builds for himself. If he is behind in paying his tax his land is subject to confiscation. During the 1968–69 upsurge many peasants stopped paying taxes. In certain areas the régimes' local bully boys were tried before a People's Court and on certain occasions condemned to death. The fear of confiscation increases the peasant's indebtedness putting more power in the hands of the kulaks, who lend money at extortionate interest rates.

The situation has deteriorated rapidly over the last decade, but even as far back as 1961 the statistics provided a grim picture of the Bengali countryside: 52 per cent of the peasants tilled their own land but a large majority of them were poverty bound smallholders; the average family farm is 3.5 acres, but 51 per cent of the farms are less than 2.5 acres; landless labourers form 26 per cent of all cultivators. The latter figure has undoubtedly risen by between 12 and 15 per cent over the last nine years. A serious famine situation has existed in the countryside over the last three years; rice production has dropped and the price of rice has risen by 30 per cent. The statistics for death from malnutrition have not yet been revealed, but they are bound to have increased greatly.

In certain areas strong peasant associations exist, but they have not yet succeeded in mobilizing the peasantry on a province-wide basis, though certain areas in North Bengal have established a reputation for militancy.

*The Proletariat.* Owing to the low level of industrialization, the rate of growth of the urban population in East Pakistan has been much lower. The First and Second Five-Year Plans (1955-65) quite blatantly allocated more funds for developing the Western province, and the actual expenditure in East has been less even than the planned expenditure. There is also a constant drain of capital resources, as they are regularly transferred from the East to the West. Despite the fact that Bengali jute has provided the province with a favourable balance of foreign trade, the foreign exchange earned by the jute has financed projects in West Pakistan. In addition, goods manufactured in West Pakistan are sold at higher prices in the Eastern province. Neither the Third nor the Fourth Five Year Plans made any serious effort to redress this balance. As a result it is not surprising that the increase of urban population in East Pakistan was from 4.4 per cent in 1951 to 5.2 per cent in 1961 (the similar period in West Pakistan showed an increase from 17.8 per cent to 24.5 per cent). Even the average monthly income of a working-class family in East Pakistan is marginally lower than it is in West Pakistan.

*The National Question.* Because of all the factors outlined above, the national question plays an increasingly important role in Bengali political life, and unless the revolutionary left in both parts of the country understands and comes to grips with this question, it will not be able to achieve the much wider emancipation which is undoubtedly on the agenda. The national question, coupled with the combined and uneven development of political consciousness in the two parts of the country, could well lead to a situation where the revolution is successful in Bengal before it moves to the West. In this situation, revolutionary socialists will be faced with the possibility of protracted struggles in the East and the need to combat chauvinism in the West. Whether or not East Bengal becomes the Yenan of the Indian sub-continent depends entirely on political leadership, its relative strength, state of preparedness and capacity to understand the dynamics of the permanent revolution.

## The State of the Left in East and West Pakistan

The Communist Party in Pakistan did not have an auspicious start. All its cadres (the word is used in its broadest sense) were told to enter the Muslim League and support those who were trying to put forward 'progressive ideas'. This followed from the position of the Communist Party of India which supported the Partition and tried to promote a joint struggle for 'independence' by the Congress and the Muslim League.<sup>5</sup> When the Communist Party of Pakistan emerged with a public face, its leadership (in West Pakistan), which was composed largely of Muslim intellectuals sent across by the CPI, found itself incapable of the twists and turns required of it by Moscow. It was enmeshed in an attempted putsch which finished it completely in West Pakistan in 1951. In the East, it was more successful and has maintained an underground party of sorts continuously since the Partition. However, the Pakistani Communists have never developed any real perspective of building an independent revolutionary party to struggle for the socialist revolution. The reason for this is their belief in the Stalinist theory of revolution by stages, coupled with their obsession for Popular Front type manoeuvring. And while the Chinese Revolution did change this attitude as far as the more advanced cadres were concerned, on the whole the Party stuck to its original concepts. It was not till the Sino-Soviet split that the question of socialist revolution was taken really seriously.

The members of the CPP in both parts of the country virtually gave up independent activity and entered the ranks of various progressive groupings where some of them attained positions of leadership. These groupings later merged to set up the National Awami Party in 1957. It was in this party that many of the old Stalinists finally found their home. The National Awami Party (NAP) consisted of a weird collection of liberals, social-democrats, nationalists and Stalinists. The party did carry out some useful activity in the anti-imperialist field, but a more important factor in radicalizing consciousness was Progressive Papers Limited—a group which was owned by a leading NAP politician, Iftikharudin, and which published *The Pakistan Times* and *Imroze*. Both daily newspapers achieved a mass circulation and voiced the feelings of the 'popular front' politicians. They were undoubtedly the most important left force in the country and were seized by the Ayub government a few months after it came to power.

Despite the various opportunities offered to them, the Stalinists proved incapable of struggling for or popularizing socialism. Their failure to explain developments in the Soviet Union and their blind adherence to Moscow were further factors in this process.

In 1967 the NAP split into pro-Soviet and pro-Peking factions. These splits were carried out by the Stalinists working in the party and their non-Communist partners seemed a bit puzzled by the reasons they were given for the split. Taking advantage of the opportunist policy of the

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<sup>5</sup> The amazing theoretical assessment of the political conjuncture made by the CPI is discussed in *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power?* Chapter I.

Peking government towards the Ayub dictatorship, the pro-Peking NAP decided to cease opposing the régime, a course in which they were undoubtedly advised by Peking.<sup>6</sup> The pro-Moscow faction was only interested in bourgeois democracy and so opposed the régime from a liberal standpoint. The capitulation of the latter and the adaptation of the former to Chinese state policy meant that there was no left party capable of carrying out a struggle against the dictatorship.

It was in this vacuum that Zulfikar Bhutto, a former Foreign Minister of Ayub's, set up the People's Party, after he had been dismissed owing to State Department pressure. Bhutto's radical demagoguery and his outspoken attacks on the Ayub régime won him a certain following, and when the upsurge started he was the only politician who could support it and take advantage of it. The pro-Peking NAP continued to insist that the Ayub régime was anti-imperialist until it had no option but to be forced on to the streets by its rank and file. In the East, the pro-Peking faction was led by the peasant leader, Maulana Bhashani, whose political instinct was much sharper than that of his theoreticians. He realized the potential of the revolt and was the first leader in Bengal to issue a call for a general strike. But even there the Maulana's opportunism and his veiled support for Ayub had had its effect, and the NAP in East Bengal could offer no leadership. It simply tail-ended the mass movement and failed to grasp the importance of the national question. In this situation the vacuum was filled by the leader of the Bengali middle class, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, accurately nicknamed Chiang Kai Sheik. Rehman's opposition to the Ayub régime had resulted in his imprisonment. When he came out of prison there were a million people to welcome him at a giant rally. He stepped in and filled the vacuum with his party, the Awami League. Both Bhutto and Rehman are opportunist right-wing social-democrats, but both have mass followings in the urban centres of West and East Pakistan respectively. Their parties also contain some genuine left elements who are in a minority, but who will press their respective leaders to fulfil their promises if either of them assumes power after the general election.

At the moment it seems that Mujibur Rehman will win a majority in East Pakistan and will then bargain with the winners in West Pakistan to form a centre-right coalition government. In the West, despite Bhutto's popularity, it is unlikely that he will win too many seats in the countryside, except in areas where he has signed pacts with the

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<sup>6</sup> For the opportunist role played by the leadership of the pro-Peking NAP during the railway strike of 1966 see 'Pakistan: the Crisis and its Origins', *The Black Dwarf* January 10th, 1969. Throughout the period of the upsurge the Chinese press maintained a complete silence concerning the momentous events in Pakistan. The Government changes were signalled by the barest of communiques and it was with evident relief that the Chinese Government discovered that the new oppressors of the Pakistani people were as disposed to be friendly as those they replaced. See for example: 'Warm Welcome to Pakistan Government Delegation Led by Air Marshal Nur Khan' *Peking Review* July 18th, 1969. On a visit through China earlier this year I was able to verify the highly confusing effects this had had on the political awareness of the Chinese masses. Thus Red Army cadres to whom I spoke at length on a train journey from Peking to Pyongyang had no inkling of the class struggles raging in Pakistan and regarded the reactionary Pakistan military clique as staunch fighters against imperialism. It may be imagined that the Chinese line has greatly contributed to the disorientation of the Left in Pakistan itself.

local landlords. His main strength will be in the cities. It is the old landlord parties who will come out strongest in West Pakistan and it is they who Mujibur will have to come to terms with.

### The Tasks of The Left

There can be little doubt that a post-general-election situation will allow revolutionists to perform open propaganda and agitational work. The task which confronts them is the building of a revolutionary vanguard as the independent expression of the workers and the poor peasants. The tragic defeat of the Indonesian CP, the opportunism of the CPI and the CPI(M) suggest that revolutionary Marxists will have to be very clear as to the main tasks of this vanguard. They will be faced with five key problems:

1. To form an independent political force of the urban and rural proletariat and to combat the ideological influence of the urban and rural bourgeoisie within the proletarian movement.
2. If the occasion arises, to give critical support to any *real* anti-imperialist move by the local ruling class (similar to the nationalization of Mexican oil, Suez Canal, Bolivian tin, foreign banks etc.), while constantly explaining the limitations of the bourgeoisie which is compelled owing to its inner contradictions to carry out these policies.
3. To represent the most radical and energetic force within the anti-imperialist movement, not only by actions of solidarity with the struggles for national liberation in the three continents, but by linking these struggles to the revolutionary movement against one's own bourgeois class, whatever verbal stance it might have adopted.
4. To alert the working masses to the fact that a struggle against the bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie is essential for an overthrow of the existing social structure, and that the latter are incapable of mobilizing the masses against imperialism.
5. To fight on these political lines for the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution. In concrete terms this means the victory of the proletarian party in gaining the leadership of toilers in both town and countryside and leading them to overthrow the bourgeois state and establish the new socialist order.

It is on this basis that a programme for a revolutionary vanguard can be worked out. The prospects for a liberal-democratic government in Pakistan are bleak. The Pakistan Army has grown accustomed to exercising direct political power and it will not sit back and watch an increasingly powerful mass movement develop. There is a possibility that a military reformist current might well emerge inside the Army itself as there has been an influx of petty-bourgeois elements from the cities, most of whom have different political ideas and beliefs than their predecessors. Also the size of the Army has increased tenfold since Ayub's coup d'état of 1958. This means a diversification inside the ranks of the Army itself. However the key question confronting the left is one of organizing itself so that when the next upsurge occurs it will be in a position to lead it. Socialist revolution is definitely on the agenda in East and West Pakistan. What is in doubt is whether Pakistani revolutionaries are capable of ensuring that it can achieve victory.

# The First Circle

Robin Blackburn

'For a country to have a great writer is like having another government,' remarks one of the characters in *The First Circle*. This observation has always been especially true of Russia and a reading of Solzhenitsyn's work confirms that it has as much relevance today as at any time in the past. *The First Circle* is a political *tour de force* as well as a major literary achievement: in fact by far the most vivid and eloquent account of Stalinism to have emerged from the contemporary Soviet Union. This fact has been obscured for Western Marxists by the tendency for bourgeois critics to acclaim any Soviet writer who can be construed to be oppositional as a towering literary genius. Solzhenitsyn deserves better than to be uncritically assimilated with a Pasternak—and discrimination should also be made between his master-piece, *The First Circle*, the weaker *Cancer Ward* and the more modest but entirely successful novella, *One Day In The Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Above all Solzhenitsyn's work must be read politically: the following is intended as a commentary on a political reading of 'The First Circle'.

Despite great documentary interest most Samizdat writings are groping and confused attempts to grapple with Soviet reality in a society where politics and history have been replaced by apologetics for over a generation. It is not surprising that the resulting vacuum should very often be filled by traditional Russian obscurantism or bourgeois ideology filtering in from the West. The threadbare official political culture has proved quite unable to challenge these despite, or perhaps because of, its monopoly control of education and the media. It is probably the political tradition of the Russian novel which helps Solzhenitsyn to surmount so successfully the severe obstacles which limit or defeat the more purely political Soviet writings available to us so far. It gives him a confidence and a method of communicating and examining his experience which these writers lack.

The model by which Solzhenitsyn is influenced is Leo Tolstoy rather than Chernyshevsky. *The First Circle* is particularly reminiscent of *Resurrection*, possibly Tolstoy's greatest novel and certainly his most subversive. Tolstoy relates in this novel the experiences of a liberal aristocrat, Nekhlyudov, who is called to serve on a jury to try a servant girl whom he once seduced. He tries to save the girl from the merciless and arbitrary oppression of Tsarist justice. Through the girl and her fellow prisoners Nekhlyudov comes to see that 'all these people were arrested, locked up, exiled, not really because they had infringed justice or behaved unlawfully but only because they were an obstacle, hindering the officials and the rich from enjoying the property they have taken away from the people . . . all this talk about justice, law, religion, God and so on was mere words veiling the coarsest cupidity and cruelty'. The novel is studded with naive insights like this which the narrative renders entirely compelling. With some necessary modifications the contemporary Soviet reader must discover much that is familiar. In *Cancer Ward* the patients are discussing Tolstoy. Rusanov, an illiterate official of the Security Ministry, knows that this writer is politically suspect. He is not at all discountenanced when informed that

Tolstoy was denounced by the 'Synod', though he is unfamiliar with the name of this Government agency. *Rasstranitsa* is, in fact, the record of Tolstoy's conflict with the Holy Synod and there is an unforgettable portrait of its chief official:

'The position occupied by Toporov, involving as it did an incongruity of purpose, could only be held by a man who was dull and morally obtuse. Toporov possessed both these negative qualities. The incongruity of the position he occupied was this. It was his duty to maintain, and to defend by external measures not excluding violence, that Church which, by its own declaration, was established by God himself and could not be shaken by the gates of Hell not by any human effort. This divine and immutable God-established institution had to be sustained and defended by a human institution—the Holy Synod—managed by Toporov and his officials. Toporov did not see this incongruity, nor did he wish to see it, and he was therefore much concerned lest some Romish priest, some pastor, or some sectarian, should destroy that Church against which the gates of Hell could not prevail. Toporov, like all those who are quite destitute of the fundamental religious feeling which recognizes the equality and brotherhood of man, was fully convinced that the common people were creatures entirely different from himself, and that the people needed what he could very well do without; for at the bottom of his heart he believed in nothing, and found such a state very convenient and pleasant. Yet he feared lest the people might also come to such a state, and looked upon it as his sacred duty, as he called it, to save them from it. His position towards the religion he was upholding was the same as that of the poultry keeper towards carrion he feeds his fowl on: carrion is very disgusting, but fowls like it and eat it, therefore it is right to feed fowls on carrion.'

### The Inmates of Mavrino

The targets of *The First Circle* are strikingly similar; the corruption and cynicism of Soviet officials, the arbitrary and vicious workings of the State's apparatus of coercion. The action of this novel mainly revolves around the inmates of Mavrino, a 'special' prison where those with technical or scientific skill are put to work on urgent research jobs and allowed slightly easier conditions than those which prevail in the vast Stalinist prison system. The prisoners represent a vast and varied galaxy of the Soviet intelligentsia under Stalin ranging from oppositionist to 'honest Stalinist'. The prison administration provides an equally diverse cross section of the Soviet bureaucracy. Thus it seems only consonant with the minimum demands of realism that, under Stalin's rule, the fate of the 'fictional' prisoners and administrators should be seen to be so directly dependent on the lightest decisions of the real historical characters in the book, Stalin and his immediate minions. Thus the novel contains numerous sharp vignettes of life on the 'outside', including an evocation of Stalin in his study and of his personal secretary, Poskryobyshev, whose knock on his study sounded 'rather as though the person outside had softly pawed the door like a dog'. Though in every way calculated to give a Zhdanov a nightmare, *The First Circle* is in some ways the first socialist realist novel ever to have been written. The choice of Mavrino (a Soviet prison in 'real life') as

focus for the novel enables Solzhenitsyn to give a near-complete panorama of Soviet society at the time, from the teeming labour camps to the plush interiors of the Ministry of State Security. The work on which the prisoners are engaged is the perfecting of a technique for 'speech clipping' and 'scrambling' telephone conversations; a technique which, it is thought, may also enable the authorities to develop a 'voice print' which identifies anyone speaking on the telephone (a headline in *Soviet Weekly* this year read 'Voice Prints as good as Finger Prints'). The first application of this technique allows Solzhenitsyn to tie together the different characters and milieux that he introduces right up to the last pages of the novel. The central action of the novel is very compact, all taking place within three days: a precisely chosen three days in December 1949 just after the excommunication of Tito, coincidental with the triumphant consummation of the Chinese Revolution and on the eve of the campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitanism'. This temporal and technical unity in what might otherwise have been a decentred and episodic work corresponds to the underlying unity of the political themes which are being developed. The political and aesthetic dimensions are harmonized with remarkable brilliance. The central theme is quite simply an investigation of how the Stalinist system could actually work, the fine interlocking of private ambition and public compulsion, bureaucratic inertia and terroristic dynamism. The portrayal of the different types of State Security official is devastatingly credible. It illustrates most vividly Amlarik's dictum that the Security organs spend half their time trying to prevent the people expressing their thoughts and the other half trying to find out what those thoughts are. However, Solzhenitsyn does not spare the representatives of the political machine of the Party proper and no illusions are encouraged about its self-regenerative capacities. Thus Stepanov, the Mavrino Party Secretary, divides his time between black-market pig-breeding and preparing for new heresy-hunts and purges. Other Party members fruitlessly seek to manipulate the repressive machine in the interests of inter-departmental rivalry: they happen to be Jewish and thus about to fall under suspicion as 'cosmopolitans'. A slightly more indulgent, though scarcely less sardonic view is taken of the non-political bureaucrats since their office involves less hypocrisy. Thus Colonel Yakonov, Director of Research at Mavrino amuses himself by following international politics: 'His idea of playing chess was simply to follow the match between East and West, trying to guess the future moves. Whose side was he on? When things were going well at work he was, of course, for the East. But if things were going badly and he was having trouble, he rather tended to the side of the West. Beyond this however, it was his belief that victory went to those who were strongest and most ruthless. This, alas, was what history was about.'

Solzhenitsyn affords the reader more than one glimpse of those forces making for the mutation and stabilization of the Stalinist system in post-Stalin revisionism. For example a senior official of the Security Ministry, Mamurin, is dismissed by Stalin. Incipient caste solidarity cushions his fall: 'Anyone else would have been sent to Norilsk, sentenced to a prison sentence term of twenty-five years and a further five of deportation and deprivation of rights but, mindful of the saying, "You today, me tomorrow", Mamurin's former colleagues stood by



him. They waited until they were sure that Stalin had forgotten him then—untried and uncondemned—they sent him quietly to a house in the country'. Today there is no régime in the world which exhibits such unbroken continuity in its leading personnel as that of the Soviet Union, where the majority of officials down to *oblast* level have held similar, if not identical, posts for upwards of three decades.

Solzhenitsyn explores the ambiguous consolations which Mavrino offers to its prisoners. Just as in Dante's *Inferno*, the 'first circle' is not such a bad place to be compared with the likely alternatives. Solzhenitsyn pictures the prisoners one Sunday evening: 'In that night between Sunday and Monday the prisoners could not be troubled by telegrams from relatives, tiresome phone calls, a baby catching diphtheria or arrest by night. The men floating in this ark were detached and their thoughts could wander unfettered. They were not hungry and not full. They were not happy and therefore not disturbed by the prospect of forfeiting happiness. Their heads were not full of trivial worries about their jobs, office intrigue or anxieties about promotion, their shoulders unbowed by cares about housing, fuel, food and clothing for their children. Love, man's age-old source of pleasure and suffering, was powerless to touch them with its agony or its expectation. Their terms of imprisonment were so long that none of them had started to think of the time when they would be released. Men of outstanding intellect, education and experience, who were normally too devoted to their families to have enough of themselves to spare for friendship, were here wholly given over to their friends. From this ark serenely ploughing its way through the darkness, it was easy for them to survey, as from a great height, the whole tortuous, errant flow of history: yet at the same time, like people completely immersed in it, they could see every pebble in its depths. On these Sunday evenings the physical, material world never intruded: a spirit of manly friendship and philosophy hovered over the sail-shaped vault of the ceiling. Was this, perhaps, that state of bliss which all the philosophers of antiquity tried in vain to define and describe?' Solzhenitsyn shows us the numberless ways in which this blissful isolation is fictitious: the consequences for themselves and their families of the prisoners' acute deprivation of everyday social intercourse; the corrosive presence of the informers; the dilemmas in confronting the subtler techniques of repression; and, above all, the yawning abyss of the labour camps awaiting them, should they refuse to co-operate. Yet the comparative freedom of Mavrino is real enough to allow Solzhenitsyn to show the prisoners as responsible for the widely differing political and personal choices they make.

#### A Certain Omission

The portrait of Rubin, a prisoner who still clings to his Stalinist faith, is sympathetic though ultimately damning. He is spirited and intelligent, consoling himself for Stalin's 'mistakes' by plotting the advances of the Red Army in China. He enacts a splendid mock-trial of Prince Igor on a charge of high treason against his country. At the same time, Solzhenitsyn exposes his grotesque fantasies of moralizing Stalinist society by establishing Temples of Civic Virtue. Rubin is a brilliant philologist and it is he who first successfully develops the method of voice-

print identification. Yet it is not only the evident contradictions of Rubin's position which Solzhenitsyn implicitly rejects, for he also appears to find distasteful the more consistent political views of Adamson, an oppositionist who has been imprisoned since the late twenties. There is a striking parallel here with *Resurrection* where the most consistent (yet wholly political) opponent of Tsarism, a Marxist, is treated with evident hostility. Adamson is a supercilious prig and philistine; Tolstoy's Marxist an inhuman fanatic. Simply as characters both are wooden and rather unconvincing, their dry politics almost devoid of any generous impulse. Given the talent of both writers for making even minor characters intelligible and living this lapse is undoubtedly significant. Its effect in Solzhenitsyn's work is heightened by an omission from his otherwise exhaustive survey of political types. The figure of Stalin looms over all Solzhenitsyn's writing and there are many references to other Soviet leaders, major and minor, who resisted or supported him: one historical figure is conspicuously absent, Trotsky. Even on occasions where it would seem only natural to do so, there is no reference to his person or to the political position which he developed. At a key point in *Cancer Ward* Shulubin, an old Bolshevik, expresses his feeling of profound self-disgust: by allowing himself to be tamely dictated to by Stalin he had come to betray all that he had lived and fought for. He laments that no one in the Party had the courage to make a stand against Stalin. He asks how it was that the revolutionary fighters of the Civil War could have lacked the necessary strength of character: why did not Krupskaya issue a warning, or Ordzhonikidze or anyone else . . . This passage figures as the testament of the older generation. Since Solzhenitsyn at one time hoped that *Cancer Ward* might be published, there could well be tactical reasons for the omission—just as such considerations might help to explain why it is a less successful novel than *The First Circle*, which cannot have been written for publication under prevailing Soviet conditions. But the same taboo on the name and figure of Trotsky is also observed in *The First Circle*. It should be stressed that otherwise Solzhenitsyn always displays a deep and sure knowledge of the history of his country, a knowledge which he acquired from the only places where it was available in Stalin's Russia, the prisons and labour camps where he spent seven years.

### Solzhenitsyn's Egalitarianism

Moreover Solzhenitsyn's sensibility is extraordinarily well-tuned to precisely those aspects of Stalinism most antagonistic to the authentic revolutionary tradition in Russia. Stalin's rampant chauvinism, elitism and obscurantism are as much the objects of his ironic scorn as the more evidently and conventionally odious aspects of his rule. Solzhenitsyn's writing is above all animated by a fierce *egalitarianism*. This is the acid with which he etches in the features of the insolent, yet fearful, usurpers of Soviet power. 'Stalin had noticed in himself a certain attraction not only to the Orthodox Church but also to other forms and features of the old order—that order from which he himself had sprung and which for the past forty years it had been his function to destroy. In the thirties he had resurrected for political reasons the forgotten word "motherland" which had been out of use for fifteen years and which had

an almost shameful ring. But as time went by he had actually grown very fond of the words "Russia" and "motherland" . . . In the same way he had decreed that officers should have batmen again, that boys and girls should be taught separately, that the girls should wear pinafores in school and that their parents should pay school fees. He had also ordained that Soviet people, like all Christian folk, should have their day of rest on Sunday and not on any day of the week; he had even reintroduced the sanctity of legal marriage, as under the Tsar, although in his time he had suffered under this. Who cared what Engels had to say on the subject?"

Nor need we imagine that Solzhenitsyn does not see the heavy legacy of Stalinism in the contemporary Soviet Union. His fascinating account published in Samizdat of the correspondence he received on the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* makes this quite clear. (Conventional anti-Stalinism of the official variety can have no attraction for Solzhenitsyn: Alexei Romanov, the man responsible for sending him to the labour camps in Stalin's time, has now risen to be head of the State Cinema Commission.)

Solzhenitsyn's own judgments and conclusions are not, of course, spelled out in his novels. This restraint situates them far beyond Tolstoy's laboured moralism in *Resurrection*. In *Cancer Ward*, for example, we are shown the self-sacrificing heroism and democratic instinct of the working surgeons without any explicit contrast being made with the political order. But this is not to say that many of Solzhenitsyn's views do not emerge clearly enough. Given the Soviet tradition of criticism we may assume that the smallest effect of character and incident on the reader has been carefully calculated. Solzhenitsyn is evidently less drawn to the more explicitly political rejection of Stalinism. There is thus the danger that his depiction of the Soviet Inferno will not even be partially redeemed by the revolt of a Ulysses. It is understandable that he cannot, as a novelist, identify with any powerful social force opposing the Stalinist system. Throughout the time of the action of his novels the Soviet working class appears to have been constantly intimidated and subordinated by the formidable apparatus of State power.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the workers that struggle against the system in some way in Solzhenitsyn's writings, necessarily do so as isolated individuals. The most critical and dedicated opponents of Stalinism in Solzhenitsyn are very often engineers, scientists or mathematicians. Solzhenitsyn is himself a mathematician and it was through possessing this skill that he sometimes was able to secure a measure of independence for his other work, and give himself time to write. The possession of some technical skill also provides a yardstick with which to measure the incompetence and bungling of the Soviet elite. Yet Solzhenitsyn does not, in the manner of a Sakharov, propose that the technical intelligentsia should supplant the existing political leadership. More than once he communicates his distrust of any purely technical

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<sup>1</sup> Though it is curious that *Cancer Ward* contains no reference to the revolts by prisoners in Vorkuta and other labour camps: this may indeed be linked to the omission noted above.

approach—even, as in *Cancer Ward*, in the realm of medicine where it might seem most defensible to common sense. The characters who emerge as positive indications of Solzhenitsyn's thinking are quite different. In *The First Circle* there are three such characters: Nerzhin, an intellectual, Spiridon, a peasant turned worker, and Ruska, a young lumpen.

### Intellectual, Peasant and Lumpen

Nerzhin is a populist, but his populism is carefully distinguished from traditional Tolstoyan sentimentality about the 'people' as an abstract and pure source of virtue. Close acquaintance with people of every sort in the labour camps persuades Nerzhin that 'the People possessed no great, homespun wisdom' nor any exceptional moral refinement. Nerzhin . . . felt he had arrived at his own original view of the People.

One belonged to the People neither by virtue of speaking the same language as everyone else nor by being among the select few stamped with the hallmark of genius. You were not born into the People, nor did you become part of it through work or education. It was only character that mattered, and this was something that everybody had to forge for himself by constant effort over the years. Only thus could one make oneself into a human being and hence be regarded as a small part of one's people.' Animated by such views Nerzhin refuses to participate further in the work at Mavrino with its dubious privileges and is duly relegated to the ordinary camps. However he is not moved by a purely individualist ethic. Nerzhin is writing a critique of Soviet society: he is forced to memorize what he has written as no paper can be smuggled through the transit camps, just as Solzhenitsyn himself had to memorize many passages of this novel, in the same circumstances. Nerzhin's new conception of the 'people' leads him, before his removal from Mavrino, to long conversations with Spiridon, the prison handy-man.

What Nerzhin admires in Spiridon is his stubborn persistence in trying to build a decent life for his family regardless of the storms raging over his head in the political world. One moment he takes up with the Reds, then he is dragooned into the White army; he fights with the partisans against the Nazis and then follows his family into Germany where they are taken by the retreating German army; he is sent to a Soviet prison on a phoney charge but then becomes a warder to reduce his sentence.

His matter-of-fact fatalism, his absence of 'heroic' qualities, his ability to survive the most extreme situations (very reminiscent of Brechtian heroes) are what recommend him: 'High-sounding words like "motherland", "religion", and "socialism", not being current in ordinary everyday conversation, seemed to be completely unknown to Spiridon. His ears were deaf to them and he could never have got his tongue round them.

"His motherland was his family.  
His religion was his family.  
And socialism was his family too."

'As for all the Tsars, priests, do-gooders, writers and public speakers, hacks and rabble rousers, prosecutors and judges, who had in any way impinged in Spiridon in the course of his life, his only retort was silently and angrily to tell them to go to the devil'.

The real irony, of course is that it is precisely this passivity of the masses, this total rejection of politics of all varieties which has always been the essential precondition for the ascendancy of the bureaucracy. It was the emasculation of Soviet democracy which paved the way for the rise of Stalin and today apathy and privatization among Soviet workers is the obverse of bureaucratic domination, privilege and repression. Solzhenitsyn characteristically qualifies his portrait of Spiridon: drinking bad alcohol in a moment of euphoria in Germany, Spiridon has become partly blind.

Ruska, the young lumpen, is a much more active and vital representative of 'the People', though as one might expect, equally devoid of any general political viewpoint. Aware that he is about to be arrested he manages to evade the police for two years using a variety of disguises and subterfuges. At Mavrino he formulates and executes a daring plan to infiltrate the informer network. At the cost of compromising himself both morally and physically, the identity of the informers is exposed. Together with Nerzhin he is expelled to the labour camps. Ruska's admirable audacity may appear to point beyond Spiridon's stoicism. But at this point political interpretation of the novel becomes hazardous and inappropriate. Solzhenitsyn has not written a political programme. For the present, Nerzhin's neo-populism is a healthy corrective to the fear and distrust of the masses more frequently encountered in Samizdat writers (see Tamara Deutscher's comments in NLR 62). Here it must always be remembered that the political import of populism in the Soviet context is very different from that in a capitalist society, with its more complex class divisions.

Western Marxists often feel inclined to examine with great care the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist credentials of the emergent Soviet opposition. They have, of course, every right to do this, but equally they have a duty to explain to the Soviet oppositionists exactly where they stand in the struggle against contemporary Stalinism in the Soviet Union. There are many questions which Solzhenitsyn raises without answering. Had he the freedom to express his full political views there are no doubt issues on which a Marxist could not find himself in agreement with Solzhenitsyn. But such a possibility cannot diminish our immense debt to the author of *The First Circle*. This work has a literary depth and political richness which few Western novels ever today achieve—Jorge Semprun's exceptional novel *The Longest Journey* is one of the few which could be compared with it. One of the characters in *The First Circle* says, on reading Turgenev: 'Have you ever noticed what makes the characters in Russian literature different from those in Western literature? In the West they have no time for anything except their careers, money and fame. But in Russia they don't even need food and drink—all they want is justice.' *The First Circle* in this respect represents a signal advance on the traditional, abstract Russian concern for justice. The sentimental moralism of Tolstoy's liberal aristocrat is

simply out of the question for those who have passed through the grinding ordeal of the labour camps. They do not affect to despise the material basis of life since they know how degrading extreme and prolonged deprivation of them can be. At the same time they are quite beyond the empty consumerism of the West. In short they still want justice—above all else—but they never suppose that is separable from food and drink.

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## The Frankfurt School

In France and Italy, the post-War period has seen the emergence of new schools of Marxist thought (Althusser, Della Volpe). In the German-speaking world, on the other hand, there is a complete continuity from the pre-War years. The veterans Lukács and Bloch are still active and influential, but the centre of the stage is firmly occupied by the group of theorists who have become known as the 'Frankfurt School'. Moreover, while the influence of recent French and Italian Marxism has been largely confined within its country of origin, the ideas of the Frankfurt School have spread, first, thanks to the emigration of the 1930's, to the USA, and in the last few years all over the world. Indeed, one of the most prominent of the members of the School, Herbert Marcuse, has become one of the bourgeoisie's latest bogey-men. Of course, Marcuse's influence is not so great as myth suggests. Nevertheless, in North America and Italy at least, the student movement has certainly been more affected by Marcuse's thought than by that of any other living Marxist, and the SDS in Germany has never emancipated itself

intellectually from the Frankfurt tutelage, despite the fact that most of the members of the School teaching in Germany denounced it, often in the most violent terms. Moreover, in France, where the influence of the School was negligible until a spate of translations after the events of May 1968, student militants associated with these events have often spontaneously reproduced typical Frankfurt ideas in their own theory and ideology. This tenacity of the Frankfurt School, and the reflowering of its ideas in a situation so unlike that of its origin (Germany in the 1930's) is remarkable. This article is an attempt to summarize and analyse the basis of these ideas,<sup>1</sup> and to provide some explanation for their reflowering.

The School takes its name from the *Institut für Sozialforschung* (Institute for Social Research) set up in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1923.<sup>2</sup> A young left-wing philosopher, Max Horkheimer, became the Director of this Institute in 1930, and continued to direct it in exile after 1933, first in France and then in the USA, until it closed down in 1941. He was joined by the philosopher and musician, Theodor Wieselndrund-Adorno and an ex-student of Heidegger's, Herbert Marcuse.<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Pollock, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Neumann and Erich Fromm were closely associated with the Institute in the 1930's, as was Walter Benjamin, though more distantly. After the War, Marcuse remained in the USA, while Horkheimer and Adorno returned to West Germany, re-establishing the Institute in Frankfurt in 1950. Here it has found new adherents, most notably the philosophers Alfred Schmidt and Jürgen Habermas. The core members of the School are Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. Some of the original members died during the War, others drifted away (e.g. Fromm), while the younger members have only been active for a few years. Hence this article is devoted almost exclusively to the work of these three core members.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There exists at least one full-length study of critical theory, G. E. Rusconi's *La teoria critica della società* (Bologna 1968, revised edition 1970). Rusconi's perspective is a broad history of ideas, focusing on Lukács and Marcuse, with rather limited attention to political and strictly theoretical analysis.

<sup>2</sup> The original director was the Marxist labour historian Carl Grünberg, and the Institute continued to publish his journal, *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, usually known as the *Grünberg Archiv*. As well as scholarly research into the history of the labour movement, the *Grünberg Archiv* also published important works by Karl Korsch, Georg Lukács and David Riazanov, the director of the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute. The Frankfurt School journal *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* was a continuation of the *Grünberg Archiv*. The aims of the Institute before 1930 are reflected in the books produced under its aegis: e.g. Henryk Grossman: *Das Akkumulations- und Zusammenbruchsgesetz des kapitalistischen Systems* (The Law of Accumulation and the Breakdown of the Capitalist System); Friedrich Pollock: *Die planwirtschaftlichen Versuche in der Sowjetunion* (Experiments in Planned Economy in the Soviet Union) and a collective work, *Studien zur Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Studies in the History of German Social-Democracy).

<sup>3</sup> The core members of the pre-War group were committed socialists, irreconcilably to the left of Social Democracy, but with an ambiguous relation to the Communist Party and no organizational affiliation. Only Marcuse had any practical political experience, in the USPD in 1917-18.

<sup>4</sup> Both Horkheimer and Marcuse have republished their major essays from the 1930's. See Max Horkheimer: *Kritische Theorie I-II* (Frankfurt 1968) and Herbert Marcuse: *Kultur und Gesellschaft I-II* (Frankfurt 1965). Page-references to articles in these volumes will refer to them as KT and KG respectively. Some of the essays in KG have been translated into English as *Negations* (New York and London 1969), hereafter referred to as N.



## Critical versus Traditional Theory

The denomination 'Frankfurt School' was not chosen by the members, but has been applied to them by others. Members of the group prefer their work to take its name from what they regard as their theoretical programme: 'critical theory'. An examination of what they, and particularly Horkheimer, who coined the phrase, have meant by critical theory therefore serves as a convenient introduction to their work as a whole.

The term 'critical theory' does not appear in the early numbers of the Institute's journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. 'Materialism' is used instead. 'Critical theory' was first discussed in an article by Horkheimer in the journal in 1937, entitled 'Traditional and Critical Theory'.<sup>5</sup> Adorno explains, thirty years later, that 'the Horkheimerian formulation "critical theory" is not an attempt to make materialism acceptable, but to bring it to theoretical self-consciousness,'<sup>6</sup> and this is plausible, because the substitution of the vaguer term for historical materialism is accompanied by a considerable radicalization of Horkheimer's position. In fact, critical theory is Horkheimer's conception of Marxism, and the phrase derives from the conventional description of Marxism as the critique of political economy. I shall attempt to situate and systematize critical theory in three respects: its relationship to traditional theory, to science and to politics.

The basic dividing line between traditional and critical theory in Horkheimer's conception is determined by whether the theory assists in the process of social reproduction, or whether, on the contrary, it is subversive of it. Traditional theory is embedded in the specialized work processes by which the existing society reproduces itself. It 'organizes experience on the basis of problems arising from the reproduction of life within present society'.<sup>7</sup> In the prevailing division of labour, the personal views of the individual scientist and his efforts for a free science have as little real significance as the individual entrepreneur's views of free enterprise. Both are allotted determinate roles in the process of social reproduction: 'The apparent independence of work processes which ought to derive their movement from the inner essence of their objects corresponds to the apparent freedom of the economic subjects, in bourgeois society. They think that they act according to their individual decisions, whereas, even in their most complex calculations, they are really only exponents of an obscure social mechanism' (KT II, p. 146).

Critical theory, on the other hand, was for Horkheimer an immanent critique of the existing society itself. For it was designed to bring the basic contradictions of capitalist society to consciousness, by placing itself outside the mechanisms of its reproduction and the limits of the

<sup>5</sup> Max Horkheimer: 'Traditionelle und Kritische Theorie', *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Heft 2, 1937 (hereafter referred to as ZfS); reprinted (with modifications—see notes 8 & 9 below) in KT II, pp. 137–191.

<sup>6</sup> Theodor Wiegand-Adorno: *Negative Dialektik*, (Frankfurt 1966), p. 195.

<sup>7</sup> Horkheimer: 'Philosophie und kritische Theorie', ZfS, 1937; reprinted in KT II, p. 192.

prevailing division of labour. 'There now exists a human attitude which takes the society itself as its object. It is not merely oriented towards the removal of particular abuses, for the latter appear to it as necessarily bound to the whole arrangement of the social structure. Although this attitude has arisen out of the social structure, it is no concern either of its conscious intention or of its objective significance that anything in this structure should function any better than it does' (KR II, pp. 155 ff.). The intentions of this critical attitude 'go beyond the prevailing social praxis' (KR II, p. 158). Critical theory is primarily a *prise de position* (*Haltung*) and only secondarily a theory of a specific type. 'On the whole, its opposition to the traditional concept of theory derives from a difference of subjects rather than from one of objects. The facts as they arise from work in society are not so external to the bearers of this attitude as they are to the academic (*Gelahrte*), or to the members of the other professions, who all think as little academics' (ibid.). The critical theorist is 'the theoretician whose only concern is to accelerate a development which should lead to a society without exploitation'.<sup>8</sup>

Hence the content of critical theory was essentially indeterminate: 'There are no general criteria for critical theory as a whole, for such criteria always depend on a repetition of events and thus on a self-reproducing totality . . . Despite all its insights into individual steps and the congruence of its elements with those of the most advanced traditional theories, critical theory has no specific instance for itself other than its inherent interest in the supersession of class domination'.<sup>9</sup> The only properties of critical theory are a political position and a place in the history of philosophy seen as a reflection of social development: 'The categorical judgement is typical of pre-bourgeois society: that is how it is, man cannot change it at all. The hypothetical and disjunctive forms of judgement belong especially to the bourgeois world: this effect may occur under certain conditions, it is either like this or otherwise. Critical theory explains: it must not be like this, men could alter being, the conditions for doing so already exist' (KR II, p. 173n.).

### The Inheritance of Classical Idealism

However, this sociological radicalism does have definite consequences for the logical structure of critical theory. For Horkheimer, the difference between traditional and critical theory was that they embody two different 'modes of cognition' (*Erkenntnisweisen*). Traditional theory's mode of cognition derives from and is applied in the specialized sciences, particularly the natural sciences. 'The axioms of traditional theory define general concepts within which all the facts in the field must be conceived. . . . In between, there is a hierarchy of genera and species, between which there are generally appropriate relations of subordination. The facts are individual cases, examples or embodi-

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from the original version in ZfS, Heft 3, 1957, p. 274. In the republished version (KR II, p. 170), 'injustice' (*Unrecht*) has been substituted for 'exploitation' (*Ausbeutung*), and the word 'only' (*auszig*) has been omitted.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from the original version, op. cit., p. 292. In the republished version (KR II, p. 190), 'social injustice' has been substituted for 'class domination' (*Klassenherrschaft*).

ments of the genera. There are no temporal differences between the units of the system . . . Individual genera may be added to the system or other changes made, but this is not normally conceived in the sense that the determinations are necessarily too rigid and must prove inadequate where the relation to the object or the object itself changes without thereby losing its identity. Rather, changes are treated as omissions in our earlier knowledge or as the replacement of individual parts of the object . . . Discursive logic, or the logic of the intellect (*Verstand*), even conceives living development in this way. It is unable to conceive the fact that man changes and yet remains identical with himself' (KR II, pp. 172 ff.).

Critical theory, on the other hand, starts from a view of Man as the subject or creator of history, and compares the existing objectifications of human activity with Man's inherent possibilities. 'The critical theory of society, on the contrary, has as its object men as the producers of all their historical life forms' (KR II, p. 192). 'In the formation of its categories and in all phases of its procedure, critical theory quite consciously pursues an interest in a rational organization of human activity which it has set itself to elucidate and legitimize. For it is not just concerned with goals as they have been prescribed by the existing life forms, but with men and all their possibilities' (KR II, p. 193).

With this view of man and society, critical theory explicitly announces its concordance with German idealism from Kant onwards, and claims to represent the preservation not only of the heritage of German idealism, but also of philosophy *tout court*, with its roots in Plato and Aristotle. Indeed critical theory's conception of truth is also that of classical philosophy. Horkheimer asserted the objectivity of truth, in opposition to all the relativist currents of the 1930's: 'according to (critical theory), only one truth exists, and the positive predicates of honesty and consistency, of rationality, of the search for peace, freedom and happiness, are not to be discussed in the same sense as other theories and practices' (KR II, p. 171). Truth is objective in the metaphysical sense of being inherent in the essence of human reality, however dismal the latter may appear, 'for the goal of a rational society, which today, of course, only appears to arise in the imagination, is really invested in every man' (KR II, p. 199). In this way critical theory was able to present itself as an inherent part of the historical process and of the struggle for a free society. But this 'political' stand was no different from the ethical aims of the whole tradition of rational philosophy. As Horkheimer put it in *The Eclipse of Reason*, written during the War, 'the philosophical systems of objective reason implied the conviction that an all-embracing or fundamental structure of being could be discovered and a conception of human destination derived from it. They understood science, when worthy of this name, as an implementation of such reflection or speculation'.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, when examined from the epistemological point of view, the

<sup>10</sup> Max Horkheimer: *The Eclipse of Reason*, New York 1947, p. 12. Cf. the chapters on one-dimensional thought in Herbert Marcuse: *One-Dimensional Man* (New York 1960). Hereafter, this book will be referred to as *ODM*. Page references are to the London paperback edition of 1968.

difference between critical theory and traditional theory turns out to be the difference between classical philosophy and modern science. Critical theory's epistemological basis is a *metaphysical humanism*.

What is the effect of this epistemology where the science of economics is concerned? What is critical theory's conception of the Marxist critique of political economy? The step from classical philosophical speculation to Marxism is simply to put idealism back 'on to its feet'. Classical idealism 'treats the activity which emerges in the given material as spiritual . . . For the materialist conception, on the contrary, every fundamental activity is a matter of social labour' (KR II, p. 193). As an 'implementation' of humanist speculation, critical theory (i.e. for the Frankfurt School, Marxism) is a unique existential judgement on man's life in capitalist society. The Marxist critique is thus conceived as a negation of economic concepts, above all of the concept of just or equal exchange, which the Frankfurt School regards as the key concept of bourgeois economics, just as exchange is the central principle of the bourgeois economy. 'Unlike the operation of modern specialized science (*Fachwissenschaft*), the critical theory of society remains philosophical even as a critique of economics: its content is formed by the inversion of the concepts which govern the economy into their opposites: fair exchange into widening social injustice, the free economy into the domination of monopoly, productive labour into the consolidation of relations which restrict production, the maintenance of the life of the society into the immiseration of the people' (KR II, p. 195). But this radical philosophical critique has a paradoxical result. Since it is philosophical and does not directly intervene in scientific discourse, it cannot create any new scientific concepts. It certainly 'transcends' bourgeois economics, but it leaves its system of concepts intact. Critical theory sees bourgeois economics as ahistorical, but not as incorrect or unscientific. 'The critical theory of society begins with an idea of simple commodity exchange defined by relatively general concepts; it then shows that, assuming all the available knowledge, and without transgressing the principles of the exchange economy as represented by scientific political economy, this exchange economy must, in the present state of men and things (which of course changes under its influence), necessarily lead to a sharpening of the social oppositions which drive towards wars and revolutions in the present epoch' (KR II, pp. 174 ff — my italics). The very radicalism of this interpretation of Marxism drastically limits its effects: the gaze of this philosophy on economics fulfils Wittgenstein's prescription. It leaves everything as it is.

### The Reduction to Philosophy

In another sense, according to this programmatic text, critical theory is more the intellectual aspect of a political practice than a specific theory. The critical theorist's 'vocation is the struggle to which his thought belongs, not thought as something independent, to be divided from this struggle' (KR II, p. 165). Horkheimer's programmatic statement links critical theory, as a mode of cognition, to the proletariat. 'Those view-points which (critical theory) takes as the goal of human activity for historical analysis, and above all the idea of a rational social organization corresponding to the general will (*Allgemeinheit*),

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are immanent in human labour, without being present to individuals or in public opinion in a correct form. It is the property of a specific interest to experience and perceive these tendencies. Marx and Engels's theory claims that this will happen in the proletariat.' As the last sentence suggests, however, Horkheimer is not sure. 'But in this society, the situation of the proletariat does not provide any guarantee of correct knowledge, either . . . The differentiation of its social structure which is fostered from above, and the opposition between personal and class interests which is only overcome at the best of times, prevent this consciousness from acquiring immediate validity' (KR II, p. 162).

Horkheimer then went on to explain the relationship between the critical theorist and the proletariat in the following terms: 'If we regard the theoretician and his specific activity alongside the oppressed class as a dynamic unity, such that his representation of the social contradictions appears not just as an expression of the concrete historical situation, but rather as a stimulating, transforming factor in it, then his function emerges clearly. The course of the conflict between the advanced parts of the class and the individuals who express the truth about them, and then the conflict between these most advanced parts together with their theoreticians and the rest of the class, should be understood as a process of mutual interaction in which consciousness unfolds with its liberating and propulsive, disciplinary and aggressive powers' (KR II, p. 164). Note that the relationship is not presented simply as one between the theoretician and the proletariat, but also as one between the theoretician and the 'most advanced parts' of the class on the one hand, and the rest of the class on the other. A few lines earlier, the expression 'advanced part' is equated with 'a party or its leadership'. In the main, however, Horkheimer's focus is on critical theory, not on a party. There is only one other reference to organization in Horkheimer's programme, and that is equally abstract. 'Something of the freedom and spontaneity of the future appears in the organization and community of those in struggle, despite all the discipline based on the need to prevail. Where the unity of discipline and spontaneity has vanished, the movement is transformed into a concern of its own bureaucracy, a drama which is already part of the repertory of recent history' (KR II, pp. 166 ff.).

Thus critical theory's conception of politics also ends in a paradox. On the one hand, it presents itself as a mere component of a political practice; on the other, it lacks any specific political anchorage. This is not just a description of its historical situation after the victory of Nazism in Germany, but a rigorous consequence of Frankfurt School theory. The over-politicization of theory leads logically to the substitution of the theory as a surrogate for politics—an *Ersatz politik*.

So far our analysis has been confined almost exclusively to a single essay by Horkheimer outlining the differences between 'traditional' and 'critical' (Frankfurt School) theory. Nevertheless, two important conclusions have already emerged. Horkheimer argues that Marxism, or critical theory, is a completely new kind of theory; yet, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that the radical break is not with classical philosophy, whose heritage, on the contrary, it claims, but with science.

Moreover, it does not propose to replace existing science with a new science, i.e., it refuses to enter the scientific arena, but denounces science from outside, from the realm of philosophy. The paradoxical result is that bourgeois science is retained, the only change being a philosophical (or even ethical) minus sign in front of its categories. Similarly, 'critical theory' associates itself with the struggle of the oppressed against capitalist class rule, but it is unable to situate this association in the political arena. It remains outside denouncing bourgeois class politics from the philosophical sphere. Horkheimer's critical theory involves a *double reduction of science and politics to philosophy*.

### Backdrop: Rationalization and Reification

What was this philosophy which could thus be substituted for both science and politics in a revolutionary stance? In fact, the theory outlined in Horkheimer's programme and developed by the Frankfurt School from the 1930's to the present was by no means a completely original intellectual formation. It was rather an extreme development of the most philosophically self-conscious form of Marxism available to the Frankfurt theorists—the philosophy of the young Lukács and Korsch, which was itself a development of a whole trend of 19th- and 20th-century German sociological thought represented most completely by Max Weber's work. The central concern of this tradition was that of 'capitalist rationalization'.

The original conceptualization of this problem in Germany was made in 1887 when Ferdinand Tönnies published his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society). The distinction which constituted the title was the contrast between the intimate personal relations of family and neighbourhood in rural pre-industrial and pre-capitalist society, and the impersonal contractual relations between men in urban, commercial and industrial society. The rationalization implied by *Gesellschaft* relations subsequently became the master concept of all Max Weber's work. For Weber, it was an inevitable destiny of Western society since the adoption of Judaeo-Christian religion in the West. It meant the *Entzauberung* (disenchantment) of the Western world, its liberation from magic, tradition and affectivity, and the development of instrumental rationality, calculation and control. Weber traced this development in religion—the Reformation; in the political sphere—bureaucracy; and in the economy—the capitalist firm and the 'spirit of capitalism'.

In his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), the young Lukács linked Weber's 'rationalization' with Marx's conception of the 'fetishism of commodities', which he generalized into the concept of 'reification'—the reduction of human relations to relations between things. Reification was a feature not of modern society in general but of a particular type of modern society dominated by market exchange; capitalist society. The Vertex of reification was the labour market, where the free labourer, the proletarian, is forced to treat his living activity, his labour, as a thing. Hence the proletariat, the class most oppressed by capitalism, was the negation of capitalist society, and the force which could realise the philosophical critique of reification by a



socialist revolution. The proletariat was the legitimate heir to German idealist philosophy, and revolutionary politics was the only means to make the divided and reified world whole and human.

This tradition, especially as represented by Lukács, had two important consequences for the subsequent development of the Frankfurt School. The first concerned its attitude to science, particularly the natural sciences; the second, its attitude to history and historical and social knowledge. The rise of the natural sciences was also part of the process Weber called rationalization, and one of the crucial problems of German idealism (using the term in the widest sense) during the latter half of the 19th century was therefore its relationship to science. In academic culture, the question concerned the relations between the natural and the cultural sciences. Historians, philosophers of history and sociologists in the idealist tradition, all insisted on a sharp distinction between them, both in the character of their object and in their method.

Paradoxically, however, the Marxism which developed in Western Europe after the First World War and the October Revolution faced the same problems, since it saw itself as the heir to classical German idealism. But these problems were also relevant to it for directly political reasons. Both classical Social-Democratic Marxism and revisionism had been permeated with a strong commitment to science, interpreted in a positivist and evolutionist sense, and with indifference and hostility, respectively, to Hegelian philosophy.

The revolutionary intellectuals of Western Europe in the 1920's, steeped in the Hegelian tradition, carried on the earlier fight of German historicism for a conception of social and historical theory different from the natural sciences. And just as Weber saw science as a moment in the process of rationalization, so Lukács regarded it as an aspect of reification, when applied to the human sphere. Immutably scientific laws of society were the expression of a world in which human relations had become things beyond human control, and the separation of different scientific disciplines revealed a specialization which destroyed the totality and historicity of human existence. For both Lukács and Korsch, the conception of Marxism as a strict science and the abandonment of the Hegelian dialectic were also directly connected with the political treachery of Social Democracy. They therefore regarded their re-introduction of Hegelianism into Marxist discourse as a re-affirmation of its revolutionary vocation.

In the early 1930's, the position on the natural sciences adopted by the Frankfurt School, and particularly by Horkheimer, was much the same as that outlined in Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukács's critique of science was aimed at the contemplative position which he claimed it implied. To regard society as governed by scientific laws, was, according to Lukács, to take a reflective attitude to it, instead of intervening actively to change it and thereby transcend its laws. The Social-Democrats had oscillated between contemplation of an inevitable evolution to socialism and moralistic exhortation of the proletariat. In both, the unity of theory and practice had been broken.

The Frankfurt School took up this critique, but as it was almost completely isolated from the working-class movement, the unification of theory and practice was broken *de facto*—especially, of course, after the victory of Fascism in 1933. Its critique of scientism therefore moves steadily away from the problem of its consequences for those who are to change capitalist society to the problem of its consequences for those who have to live in a still existing capitalist system. The emphasis is no longer on science as *contemplation* so much as on science as *domination*. In 1932, Horkheimer wrote: 'In the Marxist theory of society, science is numbered among the human forces of production . . . Scientific knowledge shares the fate of productive forces and means of production of other kinds: the extent of their application is in grave contrast both to the level of their development and the real needs of men . . . In so far as an attempt to found present society as eternity took over from the interest in a better society, which still dominated the Enlightenment, a restrictive and disorganizing moment entered science. A method oriented towards being and not towards becoming corresponded to the tendency to see the given form of society as a mechanism of equal and self-repeating processes.'<sup>11</sup> By 1944, however, Horkheimer and Adorno were arguing: 'Bacon exactly caught the spirit of the science that came after him. The happy marriage he imagined between the human intellect and the nature of things is a patriarchal one: the intellect which defeats superstition must command a disenchanted nature. Knowledge, which is power, knows no limits, either in the enslavement of creation, or in its docile submission to the masters of the world.'<sup>12</sup> The importance of this change for the political ideas of the Frankfurt School is discussed in the section on fascism below.

### Theory as the Self-knowledge of the Object

A second influence of the historicist tradition on the Frankfurt School affected its view of history, and its characteristic form was that of a return to Hegel. Lukács had already stated this project in *History and Class Consciousness*. 'The fact that historical materialism is profoundly akin to Hegel's philosophy is clearly expressed in the function of the theory as the *self-knowledge of reality*.'<sup>13</sup> Horkheimer's programme for critical theory states that this theory 'constructs the unfolding picture of the whole, the existential judgement contained in history' (KT II, p. 187). It is 'a struggle inherent in reality that by itself calls for a specific mode of behaviour'.<sup>14</sup> The basic conception of history which

<sup>11</sup> Max Horkheimer: 'Bemerkungen über Wissenschaft und Krise', KT I, pp. 1-3.

<sup>12</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam 1947), p. 14. Hereafter, this book will be referred to as DA. This position produces the characteristic idea that nature is not something to be mastered by man, as it appears in most Western thought from the Greeks onward, but something that should be regarded as a 'garden', 'which can grow while making human beings grow' (see Marcuse: *Essays and Civilization*, Boston 1955). Some writers have argued that this idea is the defining feature of the School, but as we have seen, it was not present in Frankfurt thinking from the start. Moreover, it is shared by their arch-enemy, Heidegger (see *Brief über den 'Humanismus'* in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, Bern 1947).

<sup>13</sup> Georg Lukács: *Werke*, Band 2, p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> *The Eclipse of Reason*, op. cit., p. 11.

underlies this epistemology can be seen in a quotation from Marcuse: 'When historical content enters into the dialectical concept and determines methodologically its development and function, dialectical thought attains the concreteness which links the structure of thought to that of reality. Logical truth becomes historical truth. The ontological tensions between essence and appearance, between "is" and "ought", becomes historical tension, and the inner negativity of the object-world is understood as the work of the historical subject—man in his struggle with nature and society' (ODM, p. 11).

History is viewed as one all-embracing process, in which an historical subject realizes itself. This subject is no longer Hegel's Idea, but Man. 'The goal of a rational society . . . is really invested in every man' (KR II, p. 199). This goal cannot be realized in the present society which is characterized, on the contrary, by its negation—the reification of human relations and the alienation of Man. But in spite of this, human beings still maintain a will and a struggle for a 'rational' organization of society, and it is through this will and this struggle, inherent in Man and human existence, that Man can discover the fact that human goals are negated in the prevailing conditions. Thus a knowledge of society becomes at the same time a judgement or evaluation of it. In this way, Man and social reality (created by Man) reach self-knowledge.

The reader will have noted that it is this historicist speculation which has in recent years constituted a primary target of Althusser and his followers. What effects does it have on the social theory of the Frankfurt School? The following list does not claim to be exhaustive, but it provides a starting-point for analysis.

1. It means that for humanist historicism, the term 'social totality' is something other than a scientific concept. In social science, the expression is used in a structural sense. To be able to explain a social fact, one must take into account the network of relationships of which it is a part, the structure which determines the place of that social fact and its mode of functioning. Marxism is a social science in this sense and it was by this procedure, for instance, that Marx showed that it is not the consumers and their needs and wishes which direct the capitalist economy.<sup>15</sup> In a historicist perspective, however, the totality becomes the totality of humanity's generically determined (*gattungsbestimmt*) history at a given moment. To grasp the totality then becomes to comprehend the existing reality from the standpoint of Man's goal, a rational society.

2. There is no room in the historicist conception of history for social totalities as structures of irreducible complexity, or for a discontinuous development of those complex structures. Society is always reducible to its creator-subject, and history is the continuous unfolding of this subject. At every given point in time, society is a unique manifestation of Man. This means that the concept of a mode of production, which is any classical reading of Marx is the central concept of historicism.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx: *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin 1953), pp. 10ff.

materialism, plays at most a quite subordinate role. Capitalism is thus seen not as one mode of production among others, but as a completely unique moment in the history (or more strictly speaking, in the reified pre-history) of Man. Here the Frankfurt School appeals explicitly to the treatment of capitalism in classical German historicism, as expressed, for example, by Max Weber: 'Such an historical concept, however, since it refers to a phenomenon significant for its unique individuality, cannot be defined according to the formula *genus proximum, differentia specifica*, but it must be gradually put together out of the individual parts which are taken from historical reality to make it up.'<sup>16</sup> Etienne Balibar has convincingly proved that the Marxist conception of capitalism is, on the contrary, constructed in precisely the way which Weber declares impossible.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Weber's conception has been hailed by Adorno as a third alternative between positivism and idealism.<sup>18</sup> This historicist conception of the social totality has prevented the Frankfurt School from making the contribution to historical materialism which would seem to be implied in its programme of 'social research'.

3. Critical theory sees itself as humanity's self-knowledge. Therefore it cannot and must not have a structure which is (formally) logical and systematic. Such a systematization would mean that men systematized themselves, divided themselves up among the boxes of abstract categories. 'The formalization of reason is only the intellectual expression of the mechanized mode of production' (DA, p. 126). Formal logic is an expression of 'the indifference to the individual' (DA, p. 238).

4. In a historicist interpretation, the scientific specificity of Marx's critique of political economy disappears. That critique is either regarded as a philosophical critique (Horkheimer), or as an examination of political economy from the standpoint of the totality of social being (Marcuse), but not as a scientific operation. This is quite clearly different from Marx's own conception of his work and of epistemology in general. In this context, Marx distinguished between four levels of thought: the economic subjects' immediate view of themselves and of the economy, special ideologies or speculative systems based on these immediate views, past science (above all, Ricardo's work, which Marx regarded as a science, but one which his own critique had superseded), and lastly positive science (Marx's own theory).<sup>19</sup>

5. However, the main effect of this historicist conception of knowledge is its view of capitalism, which is, of course, the present whose self-knowledge critical theory claims to represent. 'In the course of history, men attain a knowledge of their action and thereby grasp the contradiction in their existence' (KT II, p. 161). In capitalism, this contradiction is absolute; capitalism is a negation of humanity. Hence, for critical

<sup>16</sup> Max Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London 1967), p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> E. Balibar: 'Sur les concepts fondamentaux du matérialisme historique', in Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar: *Lire le Capital* (Paris 1968), Vol. II.

<sup>18</sup> *Negative Dialektik*, op. cit., pp. 165ff.

<sup>19</sup> Marx's most succinct formulation of this epistemology is perhaps to be found in *Theories of Surplus value*, Vol. III, especially the chapter on vulgar economics, Cf. Marx-Engels: *Werke* (Berlin 1965), Bd. 26:3, esp. p. 445.

theory, all the institutions of capitalist society become expressions of a contradictory inner essence. Several options are then open to the historicist. The critical theorists could have taken as their starting-point Marx's treatment of the concept of the commodity in *Capital*, and interpreted *reification* as the essential meaning of capitalism. This, of course, was Lukács's option: 'One could say that the chapter in *Capital* on the fetishism of commodities . . . contains hidden in it the whole of historical materialism, the whole of the proletariat's knowledge of itself as knowledge of capitalist society.'<sup>20</sup> Or they could have started from the concept of labour and human activity, seeing capitalism above all in terms of *alienation*. This option is characteristic of all those who base themselves on Marx's 1884 *Manuscripts*.<sup>21</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno have chosen a third path—to regard *exchange* as the 'fundamental relation' of capitalism. In this version, capitalism is the negation of just and equal exchange, producing increasing social injustice and the polarizations of power and oppression, wealth and poverty which go with it (КГ II, pp. 173 ff.). All these options say something true and important about capitalism, and they give an ideological judgement of it which can be used in the struggle to destroy it and replace it with a socialist society. But the tasks of Marxists are not confined to the ideological struggle, and from the point of view of science as a guide to political action, all these variants have to be refuted. They substitute for real history a construction derived from a philosophy of history, the 'history' of Man's alienation or reification or—in Frankfurt vocabulary—the dialectic of enlightenment. In the science of history, capitalism is a specific mode of production, characterized by a specific combination of forces and relations of production. This mode of production both sets the stage for the class struggle and is its object. Without a scientific analysis of the mode of production and social formation, no coherent class strategy can be developed by which to overthrow it. The Frankfurt School not only do not provide Marxism with any instruments to assist in the construction of this strategy, they denounce all such instruments *simply because they are instruments*.

### Fascism as the Truth of Liberalism

As we have seen, a typical feature of the Frankfurt School's historicist ideology is the reduction of the complexity of the capitalist social formation to an essence which is then both expressed and masked by the different phenomenal forms which the essence takes in concrete historical existence. As history unfolds, the essence is more and more revealed. This ideological conception acquired great political importance when the Frankfurt School turned to the analysis of fascism.

Naturally enough, efforts to explain the roots of fascism were a major pre-occupation of all anti-fascist intellectuals in the 1930's and during the War. Many of these interpretations focused not on economic and political problems, but on ideological and cultural factors. It is re-

<sup>20</sup> Lukács, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

<sup>21</sup> Marcuse was among the first in the revolutionary camp to attach importance to the alienation of labour. See his 'Über die philosophischen Grundlagen des wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Arbeitsbegriffs' (1933) in КГ II.

markable that not only are these cultural explanations divided into two diametrically opposed camps where their interpretation of fascist culture is concerned, but also each of these camps contains both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary ideologists. To one of these camps, fascism was essentially an irrationalist phenomenon, a revolt against reason. To the other, on the contrary, it was the triumph of manipulative rationality. To the first camp belong both Karl Popper, with his *The Open Society and its Enemies*, and the later Georg Lukács in his *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (The Destruction of Reason). The Frankfurt School emphatically belong to the second group, where they find their reactionary counterpart in figures like Friedrich von Hayek. But within this basic framework, the Frankfurt School's theory of fascism has not remained static. The year 1939 provides a convenient divide between two distinct phases in this development.

In the first period, the Frankfurt School view of the roots of fascism contains two main themes with sources in Marxism and psycho-analysis<sup>22</sup> respectively. On the economic level, fascism is explained as the replacement of competitive capitalism by monopoly capitalism and as the seizure of power by the monopoly capitalists in order to deal with the economic and political crisis of capitalism. In a vivid essay on 'The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State', Marcuse shows that fascist attacks on liberalism notwithstanding, these two ideologies and political systems represent two different stages of the same type of society, to which both of them belong: respectively, monopoly capitalism, and competitive capitalism. Marcuse first points out that the attacks on the bourgeoisie, i.e. on the profit motive, in fascist ideology are directed against the capitalists of competitive capitalism. The 'merchant' (*Händler*) is reviled, while homage is paid to the 'gifted economic leader' (*Wirtschaftsführer*).<sup>23</sup> According to Marcuse, fascism finds its most important spring-boards in 'the naturalistic interpretation of society and the liberalist rationalism that ends in irrationalism. Both believe in "natural", eternal laws of society. The liberal rationalization of the economy and society is essentially private, relating to the rational practice of the single individual; it lacks any rational determination of social goals. It therefore

<sup>22</sup> Freudian psycho-analysis and meta-psychology have been of great importance for Frankfurt theory. A psycho-analytic criticism of civilization as a repression of basic human instincts was thereby added to the Marxist critique of capitalist civilization. The core members of the group have refused to attenuate 'the uncanniness' (*Unheimlich*) in culture, the conflict between society and human instinct, by sociologizing the latter, and Adorno and Marcuse have directly attacked the neo-Freudian revisionists, including their former colleague, Erich Fromm, for doing so (see Adorno: 'Sociology and Psychology', *New Left Review* 46 & 47, 1967-68, and above all Marcuse: *Essays and Civilization*, op. cit.). But they give Freudian theory an historical character by distinguishing a reality principle specific to capitalist society, the performance principle. This approach both sharpens the indictment of capitalist society and radicalizes its negation, which is associated with a realm 'beyond the reality principle', i.e. beyond the performance principle. The precondition for this is such a high level of the productive forces that labour can be abolished. Unlike Reich, sexual liberation in the genital sense is not the psycho-analytical aim of Frankfurt theory so much as the investment of all human activity with libidinous energy.

<sup>23</sup> Marcuse: 'Der Kampf gegen den Liberalismus in der totalitären Staatensuffassung', *KGI*, p. 25; *Negations*, pp. 11-12.

comes to an end when an economic crisis breaks through its supposed harmony of interests. At this point, liberal theory has to turn to irrational justifications of the existing system' (KG I, p. 31; N, pp. 17-18).

The second theme in the first phase of the Frankfurt School's explanation of fascism is the precedent for fascist moralism provided by anti-sensual bourgeois morality in general, with its condemnation of hedonism and happiness in favour of 'virtue'.<sup>24</sup> This hostility to pleasure emerges paradoxically in what Marcuse called 'affirmative culture', in which happiness and the spirit are split away from the material world into a separate, purely spiritual realm called *Kultur*. 'By affirmative culture is meant that culture of the bourgeois epoch which led in the course of its own development to the segregation from civilization of the mental and spiritual world as an independent realm of value that is also considered superior to civilization. Its decisive characteristic is the assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realizable by every individual for himself "from within" without any transformation of the state of fact' (KG I, p. 63; N, p. 95). In the pre-fascist period, this culture could be characterized as an 'internalization' (*Verinnerlichung*), but 'during the most recent period of affirmative culture, this abstract internal community (abstract because it left the real antagonisms untouched) has turned into an equally abstract external community. The individual is inserted into a false collectivity (race, folk, blood, and soil)' (KG I, p. 93; N, p. 125).

Apart from culture in general, a crucial element in fascism, according to the Frankfurt School, was the psychology of the individual citizen which made fascist oppression possible, the so-called 'authoritarian personality'. The authoritarian personality, too, was for the Frankfurt School a creation of the classical bourgeois epoch. In the huge collective volume *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Studies in Authority and the Family), whose principal contributions were written by Fromm, Horkheimer and Marcuse, the Frankfurt School examined the way in which the family functions as a mechanism to preserve the existing society, and, more specifically, the way in which the bourgeois family functions as an inculcator of authoritarianism.

In 1939, the Spanish Republic was defeated, Molotov and Ribbentrop signed the Nazi-Soviet pact and the Second World War broke out. This was the decisive crisis for the intellectual left of the 1930's. However, its effect on the Frankfurt School, was at first registered only in a practical retreat from politics, not a modification of theory. Hence the content of its theory of fascism changed very little, but its themes are more sharply expressed. This is well represented by Horkheimer's essay *The Jews and Europe*, which was completed in the first days of September of that year.<sup>25</sup> Horkheimer argues that the present crisis, far

<sup>24</sup> See Marcuse, op. cit., and Horkheimer: 'Egoismus und Freiheitsbewegung', ZfS, 1936, etc.

<sup>25</sup> Horkheimer: 'Die Juden und Europa', ZfS, 1939 (hereafter referred to as JB). Characteristically, this resolute affirmation of the author's commitment to Marxism has been omitted from KR. However wild this article may be theoretically, it should be remembered that at this very time, renegades like James Burnham were beginning to concoct the idea of the 'managerial revolution'.

from bringing Marxism into question, vindicates its analyses of the power relations, monopolistic tendencies and eruption of crises in capitalist society. 'He who does not want to speak about capitalism should also be silent about fascism' (JE, p. 115). 'The (Marxist) theory destroyed the myth of a harmony of interests; it presented the liberal economic process as the reproduction of relations of domination by means of free contracts which are enforced by the inequality of property. The mediation has now been removed. Fascism is the truth of modern society, which this theory had grasped from the beginning' (JE, p. 116).

### Logic as Domination

But the retreat from politics, even of the abstract type available to the Frankfurt School in the 1930's, eventually directly affected the theory, too, and as part of the theory, the theory of fascism. This is seen at its clearest in Horkheimer and Adorno's book *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Dialectic of the Enlightenment), written during the War. Horkheimer and Adorno ask 'why, instead of entering into a truly human condition, does humanity sink into a new kind of barbarism?' Here a comparison can be made with Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies* and Von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*. These last two authors put the blame on socialism and the labour movement: Popper, because Marxism had allegedly substituted historicism and utopianism for 'piecemeal social engineering'; Hayek, because socialism had introduced the ideas of planning and State intervention into the paradise of competitive capitalism. Horkheimer and Adorno's answer to the question is, of course, quite different. For them, fascism is the self-destruction of the liberal Enlightenment. Fascism is not just the truth of liberalism in the sense that it nakedly reveals the real inequalities and oppression inherent in the apparently free exchange in the capitalist market. Fascism is the truth of the whole aim of the bourgeois Enlightenment from Bacon on to liberate man from the fetters of superstition. The main offender is not the market and the relations of production, but the natural sciences and their empiricist counterpart in epistemology. The whole meaning of science and logic is brought into question: 'For many years now we have noted that the great discoveries of modern scientific organization (*Betrieb*) have been made at the cost of an accelerating decline in theoretical culture, but we still believed that we ought to follow this organization insofar as our contribution was limited primarily to the critique or continuation of specialized theories. It was at least designed to stick thematically to the traditional disciplines, to sociology, psychology and epistemology. The fragments which we have brought together here, however, indicate that we have to renounce that confidence. A careful watch and examination of the scientific tradition, particularly where positivist censors have consigned it to oblivion as useless ballast, forms a moment of knowledge, but in the contemporary collapse of bourgeois civilization, not only the organization, but even the meaning of science has come into question' (DA, p. 5).

Horkheimer's programme for a critical theory still maintained the Lukácsian position on science: it was contemplative, as opposed to a



commitment to fundamental social change. In *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, however, the focus is wholly on science as an instrument of domination.<sup>26</sup> Now natural science and Bacon's empiricist theory of knowledge are the main targets. 'What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order to dominate it and men completely.' 'The Enlightenment's attitude to things is the same as the dictator's to men. They know them in so far as they can manipulate them' (DA, pp. 14 and 20). Logic as such is contaminated because of its indifference to the qualitative and to the individually unique. It is directly linked to the capitalist rationalisation of labour. 'The indifference to the individual which is expressed in logic draws the consequences of the economic process' (DA, p. 238). Fascism has granted science its full honours, freeing it from all moral considerations. 'The totalitarian order . . . invests calculating thinking with all its rights and upholds science as such' (DA, p. 106).

Moreover, the form in which *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* is written takes this critique of logic and science into account. It is a collection of philosophical fragments (Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, written at the same time, is similarly a collection of aphorisms). Its theme is the inner contradictions of the Enlightenment, defined as the 'disenchantment (*Entzaubering*) of the world', and the self-destruction these contradictions bring about.<sup>27</sup> An allegory for this dialectic can be found in the twelfth book of the *Odyssey*, where Ulysses' ship has to pass by the sirens, whose immensely beautiful song leads men to lose themselves in the past. Ulysses avoids this danger in two ways. He has one solution for his sailors: he blocks their ears with wax. 'The worker must look straight ahead, lively and concentrated, ignoring everything that happens on either side.' The other solution is for himself, the land-owner, he has himself bound to the mast. He can thus enjoy the sirens' song because he has made their temptation a merely contemplative object, an art, and the greater the temptation, the harder he makes his men bind him, like the later bourgeois who refuses himself happiness more and more obstinately, the nearer he comes to it through the growth in his power (DA, p. 47 ff.). The theme is then pursued in Kant, de Sade and Nietzsche, in order to show that 'the subjugation of everything natural to the autocratic subject reaches its acme in the domination of the blindly objective, of the natural' (DA, p. 10). The authors also follow the development of the Enlightenment into commercial culture and mass communications: 'Enlightenment as mass deception'.

The most directly political analyses in the book are found in seven theses on anti-semitism. The seventh is the most remarkable. It was added after the War amidst the general democratic euphoria over the defeat of fascism. Precisely at this moment, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that fascism and anti-semitism have been preserved in the very structure of existing party politics. The tone of this thesis is set by the first sentences: 'But there are no more anti-semites. The last ones

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *op. cit.*, especially Ch. VI.

<sup>27</sup> This concept closely corresponds to Max Weber's notion of rationalization, whose initial manifestation was the absence or progressive elimination of magic from Western religion, starting with Mosiac Judaism, and from Western culture generally.

were liberals who wanted to voice their anti-liberal opinions' (DA, p. 235). The preservation of anti-semitism is then illustrated by a reality of the US political system, the 'ticket' (e.g. the Nixon-Agnew ticket). 'Anti-semitic judgement has always been an index of stereotyped thought. Today the stereotype is all that remains. People still choose, but only between totalities. Anti-semitic psychology has been largely replaced by a mere yes to the fascist ticket, to the list of the slogans of quarrelsome heavy industry' (DA, p. 236). The ticket mentality is part of the all-pervasive process of the negation of individuality. Even progressive parties are directly attacked on these grounds. 'In any case, the basis of the development which leads to ticket thought is the universal reduction of all specific energies to a single, equal and abstract form of labour, from the battle-field to the film-studio. But the transition from such conditions to a more human situation cannot take place, because the same thing happens to the good as to the bad. Freedom on the progressive ticket is as external to the structure of power politics, to which progressive decisions inevitably amount, as hostility to Jews is to the chemical trust' (DA, p. 243).<sup>28</sup>

This treatment of fascism reveals very clearly the limits of historicism. An interpretation of fascism as the essence behind the phenomena, as the 'truth of' modern (capitalist) society, can never achieve the central aim of Marxist analysis, what Lenin called the 'concrete analysis of a concrete situation'. However deep its roots lay in the structure of monopoly capitalism, fascism was in fact a special type of monopoly capitalist State which arose in a specific historical conjuncture.<sup>29</sup> In failing to recognize this, the Frankfurt School in effect took up the positions adopted by the Comintern in the so-called Third Period, after the Sixth Conference of 1928: fascism was seen as an inevitable and culminating phase of capitalism. For all their virtuosity, the Frankfurt School explanations of fascism were thus ultimately an example of theoretical impotence. The theme of *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* is the self-destruction of bourgeois reason: but this theory itself is a case of the self-destruction of intellectual radicalism. It is precisely the radicalism of the authors' rejection of bourgeois society and culture which wrests the weapons of socialist theory (science) from their hands, forcing them to retreat into speculative philosophical fragments.

The reduction of science to philosophy is thus revealed in this test case of Frankfurt School theory as doubly mystificatory. The direct condemnation of the logic of the sciences as responsible for fascism make it impossible to develop a conjunctural theory of fascism which would have helped to fight it more effectively. The retreat from Marxist scientific concepts into a philosophical (ideological) critique of capitalist society then covers up for the lack of a theory of it.

### The Political Collapse of Horkheimer

The second reduction characteristic of the Frankfurt School, as we

<sup>28</sup> Hence it is possible to argue that all capitalist societies today are fascist still. This notion has pervaded much recent student thinking, especially in Germany, where it is embodied in the concept of '*Spätkapitalismus*' (late capitalism).

<sup>29</sup> See Quentin Hoare: 'What is Fascism?', *New Left Review* 20, Summer 1963.

have seen, is that of politics to philosophy. An examination of this entails an analysis of the attitude of the School to political practice. In this too there is an evolution, but it is further complicated by the political divergences of the School in the post-War years. As we have seen, their initial position, as represented in Horkheimer's programmatic text of 1937, was similar to that of Lukács. The proletariat was still regarded as the agent of revolution, and the aim of politics was the unity of philosophy and the proletariat in a realized proletarian class consciousness. However, in the late 1930's it was impossible to sustain the young Lukács's belief in the immediacy of this revolutionary unification.<sup>30</sup>

After the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939, this initial scepticism deepened. The bleak political situation induced a retreat from politics, but no immediate capitulation. 'Nothing is to be hoped for from the alliances of the great powers. No trust can be put in the collapse of the totalitarian economy . . . It is completely naïve to call from the outside for the German workers to rise. He who can only play at politics should keep away from it. Confusion has become so general that truth has all the more practical value the less it meddles with any intended practice' (JR, p. 135). Horkheimer recalls the Jews' steadfast rejection of the worship of false gods: 'A lack of respect for an existing authority which extends even to God is the religion of those who, in the Europe of the Iron Heel, continue to devote their lives to the preparation for a better one' (JR, p. 136). Of anti-Communism, at this stage, there was not a word.

The post-War political position of Horkheimer and Adorno, by contrast, has had three aspects: the maintenance of critical theory as a pure theory; the retreat from politics into exclusive individualism; and academic integration. However, in none of their later works is either critical theory or its relationship to Marx and Engels repudiated.<sup>31</sup> In his *Negative Dialektik*, Adorno even openly scorns the idealist exploitation of the 'Young Marx' on the grounds that to centre critical theory on the concept of reification only serves to make it idealistically acceptable to the ruling consciousness.<sup>32</sup> They have also maintained a firm dividing line between their positions and those of conservative *Kulturkritik*.<sup>33</sup>

In Horkheimer's programme, critical theory was defined as part of the political practice of the oppressed classes. From the middle 1940's, critical theory was located elsewhere, in the individual mind. The whole tenor of Horkheimer and Adorno's works in this period is characterized by the conviction that the only place where anything is still possible in the totalitarian world is the 'individual sphere', where the task is to resist the intruding cruelty of the 'administered world'. This is well expressed by Adorno in the preface to *Minima Moralia*

<sup>30</sup> See above.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Max Horkheimer: 'Theism-Atheism', in *Zeitschrift* (a Festschrift for Adorno, Frankfurt 1963), hereafter referred to as TA; his preface to KR; and Adorno's *Negative Dialektik*, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., p. 189

<sup>33</sup> See for instance Adorno's *Prisoners* (Frankfurt 1963), trans. as *Prisms* (London 1967).

(1951): 'In view of the totalitarian unanimity which cries out for the eradication of difference directly as meaning, some of the liberating social forces may even temporarily come together in the sphere of the individual. Critical theory can reside in the latter without a bad conscience.'<sup>34</sup> Horkheimer added a decade later: 'Our hope rests in the work to ensure that in the beginning of a world period dominated by blocks of administered men, a few will be found who offer up some resistance, like the sacrifices of history, to whom belongs the founder of Christianity' (TA, p. 19). This religious solution has at times taken a Jewish form, too.<sup>35</sup>

The academic integration of the West German wing of the Frankfurt School is best represented by *The Authoritarian Personality*, published in 1950, with Adorno as its senior author and Horkheimer as director of the entire research project (entitled *Studies in Prejudice*). Here the stress on individual psychology becomes a complete capitulation to bourgeois social psychology in theory, method and political conclusions. Horkheimer says in his preface: 'It may strike the reader that we have placed undue stress upon the personal and the psychological rather than upon the social aspect of prejudice. That is not due to a personal preference for psychological analysis, nor to a failure to see that the cause of irrational hostility is in the last instance to be found in social frustration and injustice. Our aim is not merely to describe prejudice but to explain it in order to help its eradication . . . Eradication means re-education, scientifically planned on the basis of understanding scientifically arrived at. And education in a strict sense is by its nature personal and psychological.'<sup>36</sup> In the last thesis on anti-semitism in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, anti-semitism was embedded in the very core of the modern political system, both East and West. Here it has suddenly become something which can be done away with by personal education, presumably by the Adenauer government or the Western occupation authorities in Germany. It is profoundly symbolic that Adorno calls the consciously anti-authoritarian personality-type 'the genuine, liberal.'<sup>37</sup> This is a long way from the thesis that fascism is the truth of liberalism and the anti-semitic the liberal who wants to voice his anti-liberal opinion.

The effect of the combined factors of formal preservation of the theory, exclusive individualization and academic integration is a cumulative mystification. The formula here provides a legitimation for a purely ideological radicalism snugly installed in the cosy academic institution, without even an indirect relationship to politics as experienced by the masses, but still cultivating a critical theory going back to an interpretation of Marx.

<sup>34</sup> Theodor W. Adorno: *Minima Moralia* (Frankfurt 1951), p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> See the interview with Horkheimer in *Der Spiegel*, January 5th, 1970.

<sup>36</sup> *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York 1950), p. VII. The reader may feel that, after criticizing the Frankfurt School for its rejection of science, I am ungrateful in rejecting this apparent appeal to a policy 'scientifically planned on the basis of understanding scientifically arrived at'. But an appeal to science does not ensure scientificity. Here it is the bourgeois ideology of social psychology which is meant. This is another case of the paradox of Frankfurt hyper-radicalism: the categories denounced philosophically have slipped back into academic discourse unscathed.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 781.

This development has also been accompanied by a retreat from the resolute rejection of anti-communism in 1937 and even in 1939. *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* already implies that the choice between the USSR and the USA is one between two equal evils, two totalitarian 'tickets', and in the Cold War period, Horkheimer and Adorno committed themselves further to the West against the East. Horkheimer has repeatedly declared his commitment to the 'most civilized' or 'European' States, against the threatening 'totalitarian world', in which are included not only the Communist States but the 'backward countries' with their 'exaggerated nationalisms' (TA, p. 23). According to the former director of *Studies in Prejudice*, not only should Kaiser Wilhelm II's warning of the 'menace of the yellow race . . . be taken very seriously today,' but 'it is perhaps more urgent than it appears', though, 'it is indeed not the only threat' to Europe.<sup>38</sup> In a recent interview, Horkheimer has gone over to the bourgeois camp in even more positive and ludicrous terms, no longer as the lesser of two evils (note also the motivation given for his philosophical works!): 'In my view, sociology today has still insufficiently noted the fact that the development of man is bound up with competition, that is, with the most important element of the liberal economy.' 'You see, I am thinking of my father [an industrial tycoon] . . . The competitive struggle enabled him to exert himself practically, in a way not unlike that in which I myself developed my original philosophical interest according to the demands of an academic career, so as to be able to maintain my late beloved wife.'<sup>39</sup>

### Marcuse: Integrity and Contradiction

Marcuse's political evolution has, of course, been a polar contrast. Not only did he survive the McCarthy period without compromising himself, like so many other left-wing intellectuals, but he has never rejected those students who have been inspired by his ideas to more practical forms of struggle, as Horkheimer and Adorno have done. Marcuse's political record is an exemplary one. But it does not necessarily imply a deep gulf between the theoretical structure of his thought and that of the other members of the school. An ideological problematic is characteristically labile and can be made to fit many political positions.<sup>40</sup> However, one important theoretical difference can be detected even in 1937. This concerned the relation between philosophy and Marxism as a theory of society. This difference is discernible in the discussion of Horkheimer's programme which followed its publication in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* under the title 'Philosophy and Critical Theory'. As we noted above, Horkheimer argued that 'the critical theory of society . . . remains philosophical even as a critique of economics'. This is because critical theory is something more than a specialized economic discipline, it is a theory and a judgement of the whole of human existence. For Marcuse, however, this transcendence of specialized economics is contained in a critical theory

<sup>38</sup> Max Horkheimer: 'On the Concept of Freedom', *Diogenes*, No. 53 (Paris 1966).

<sup>39</sup> *Der Spiegel*, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Habermas's suggestion that his political stand is due to an activism inherent in his Heideggerian formation need not be taken very seriously. Cf. J. Habermas (ed.): *Antworten auf Marcuse* (Frankfurt 1968), p. 12.

of society as such, which is the successor to classical philosophy. 'Philosophy thus appears within the economic concepts of materialist theory, each of which is more than an economic concept of the sort employed by the academic discipline of economics. It is more due to the theory's claim to explain the totality of man and his world in terms of his social being. Yet it would be false on that account to reduce these concepts to philosophical ones. To the contrary, the philosophical contents relevant to the theory are to be educed from the economic structure' (KG I, p. 102; N, pp. 134-5). This conception of the relationship between critical theory and philosophy explains the sub-title of *Reason and Revolution*—'Hegel and the rise of social theory'. 'If there was to be any progress beyond this philosophy, it had to be an advance beyond philosophy itself and, at the same time, beyond the social and political order to which philosophy had tied its fate.'<sup>41</sup> In 1948, Marcuse re-affirmed this attachment to Marxism as a social theory which rejects philosophy in a critique of Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*. 'One step more (from Hegel's philosophy) toward concretization would have meant a transgression beyond philosophy itself. Such transgression occurred in the opposition to Hegel's philosophy . . . But neither Kierkegaard nor Marx wrote existential philosophy. When they came to grips with concrete existence, they abandoned and repudiated philosophy . . . For Marx, the conception of "*réalité humaine*" is the critique of political economy and the theory of socialist revolution' (KG II, p. 83; *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, VII, no. 3, March 1948, p. 335).

But these intellectual differences should not be taken too far. Marcuse's most famous work, *One-Dimensional Man*, is firmly in the Frankfurt tradition, and shares its theoretical faults, particularly the self-destructive intellectual hyper-radicalism which characterized *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. As Marcuse explains in the preface to the republication in 1965 of his essays from the 1930's, 'Thought in contradiction must become more negative and more utopian in opposition to the status quo. This seems to me to be the imperative of the current situation in relation to my theoretical essays of the 1930's' (KG I p. 16; N, p. xx). But, as realized in *One-Dimensional Man*, this project reveals at its centre a massive contradiction. The book is conceived as a picture of industrial society or 'the most highly developed contemporary societies', whereas in fact it is a highly conjunctural work, defined by the situation in the USA in the 1950's and early 1960's, before the internal effects of the Vietnamese War had made themselves felt, before the student movement and the rise of working-class resistance, and before the visible disintegration of US supremacy over Western Europe and Japan.<sup>42</sup> Marcuse's weakness is not his failure to see these future tendencies, but the fact that his analysis provides no concepts by means of which he might have discovered them. As Marcuse himself says, 'the critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Marcuse: *Reason and Revolution* (Oxford 1941), p. 257.

<sup>42</sup> For the effects of the Vietnamese War, see my 'From Petrograd to Saigon', *New Left Review* 48, 1968; for the new tendencies of US capitalism, see Ernest Mandel: 'Where is America Going', *New Left Review* 34, 1969, and 'The Laws of Uneven Development', *New Left Review* 59, 1970.

between the present and its future' (ODM, p. 14). Moreover, instead of using a Marxist analysis of modern monopoly capitalism, Marcuse relies on such works as Berle and Means: *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, William H. Whyte: *The Organization Man*, and the writings of Vance Packard. The crucial argument about the integration of the working class is characteristically sustained by reference to academic American sociology. Once again, the radicalism of the critique has left its ideological object untouched.

In fact, *One-Dimensional Man* represents a step backwards for Marcuse *vis-à-vis* his attitudes to technology, to philosophy and to classical bourgeois culture. In *Soviet Marxism* he upheld the Marxist notion of the 'essentially neutral character' of technology and made it one of the corner-stones of his analysis of Soviet society; the change from a nationalized economy to a socialised one is a political revolution entailing the dismantling of the repressive State and the installation of control from below.<sup>43</sup> In *One-Dimensional Man*, the opposite view prevails: 'The traditional notion of the "neutrality" of technology can no longer be maintained . . . The technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concept and construction of techniques' (ODM, p. 14). Secondly, the conception of philosophy and its role in *One-Dimensional Man* contains a repudiation, though more implicit, of Marcuse's earlier positions. Instead of asserting the need to replace philosophy with a Marxist theory of society, *One-Dimensional Man* sets out to defend and maintain philosophy in the classical idealist sense, with concepts antagonistic to the prevailing discourse. This reversal is perhaps most clearly expressed in the following sentence, where instead of replacing philosophy with social theory and politics, he suggests that the problem is to replace politics with philosophy. 'In the totalitarian era, the therapeutic task of philosophy would be a political task . . . Then politics would appear in philosophy, not as a special discipline or object of analysis, nor as a special political philosophy, but as the intent of its concepts to comprehend the unmutated reality' (ODM, p. 159). Thirdly, the concept of 'affirmative culture' discussed in the 1937 article mentioned above, the sublimated bourgeois culture in which the values denied by bourgeois society in everyday life are affirmed in the sphere of high culture, is replaced by the concept of 'repressive desublimation'. Here we are basically dealing with a change in the object of analysis, from one type of bourgeois society to another, and in this sense the concept of repressive desublimation is an important and fruitful tool of analysis. But in another paradox of intellectual hyper-radicalism, what was once condemned as 'affirmative culture' is now hailed as a culture of negation, denouncing the poverty of society (ODM, p. 58 ff.). In *One-Dimensional Man*, a critique which sets out to refute the very structure of logic and science bases its social analyses on pseudo-liberal journalism and academic sociology, and a critique which does not even find Marxism negative enough turns the affirmative bourgeois culture into a negative one.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Soviet Marxism*, (New York 1958), pp. 160-191.

<sup>44</sup> These critical remarks should not, however, obliterate the differences between *One-Dimensional Man* and the post-War works of Horkheimer and Adorno. The former is still an attempt at a concrete social analysis with a direct bearing on politics.

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## The Negation of the Negation

*One-Dimensional Man* is thus, of all Marcuse's works, the closest to the main-stream of the Frankfurt School. Yet it is also the book that has had the most political influence, more, probably, than anything else produced by the School in all its forty years of existence. Despite its pessimism, this book has become one of the standard texts of the student revolt of the late 1960's. But before examining the link between the views of the Frankfurt School and the recent student revolt, we must examine the concepts which underly these political positions. The most important one arises directly from the hyper-radicalism of the School's critique of capitalist society. Critical theory rejects any positive presence in capitalist society (such as the proletariat) and seeks the purest negation, *the negation of the negation*, as the essence of revolution. This Hegelian notion of revolutionary change has played a central and disastrous role in Frankfurt thought. In their search for the absolute negation of the prevailing theoretical and ideological discourse, the thinkers of the Frankfurt School feel forced to go outside both science, concrete social analysis, and formal logic. Horkheimer's 1937 programme for a critical theory tried to find an Archimedean point outside society in order to uproot itself from the process of social reproduction. In the 1940's, Horkheimer and Adorno considered it necessary to go even further, formulating their social critique only in philosophical fragments, because any continuous discourse was bound to lapse into positivity. The search for an absolute negation of the negation is also the rationale for Marcuse's retreat from Marxism in *One-Dimensional Man*: 'An attempt to recapture the critical intent of these categories (society, class, individual, etc), and to understand how the intent was cancelled by the social reality appears from the outset to be regression from a theory joined with historical practice to abstract, speculative thought; from the critique of political economy to philosophy. This ideological character of the critique results from the fact that the analysis is forced to proceed from a position "outside" the positive as well as the negative, the productive as well as the destructive tendencies in society' (ODM, pp. 12 ff.).

This attempt by the theory to pull itself up by the hair does not make it more revolutionary, but rather more philosophical. The same attitude can be detected in the denial that the economic class struggle can play a revolutionary role in the developed capitalist countries.<sup>45</sup> The historical experience of revolutions shows that they have not been sustained by the absolute negativity of the revolutionaries' demands, but by the determination with which concrete immediate demands have been urged in particular historical situations. Practical revolutionaries—Rosa Luxemburg as well as Lenin—have therefore always stressed the dialectical link between the various types of class struggle. None of them bothered to look for the absolute negation. On the contrary, Lenin's theory of revolution has two key moments. One is the building

<sup>45</sup> Marcuse: *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), Chs. 3 & 4. This is still asserted despite the fact that the economic class struggle has been crucial to the militant working-class struggles of Italy and France in the last few years, and has also played a not insignificant role in the Scandinavian countries, which certainly cannot be dismissed as 'more backward capitalist countries'.

up of an organized revolutionary force and leadership. The other is the emergence of a revolutionary situation. This is characterized by a fusion of different contradictions such that the question of State power is put on the immediate agenda. The revolutionary situation can be ushered in by the most diverse, and apparently banal causes, including even a parliamentary crisis. The conception of the revolutionary situation as a fusion of different contradictions is not an *ad hoc* explanation, but follows logically from the analysis of society as a complex social formation with mutually irreducible elements.<sup>46</sup> Now we have already seen that, far from conceiving society as a complex structure, historicist theories of society look for an inner essence revealed in all its parts. If this essence is oppressive, the source for a transformation cannot be found inside society, for all its manifestations share the oppressive nature of the essence. The agent of transformation can only be an external Negating Subject. The first historicist versions of Marxism thought that this external negating subject was the proletariat, thrust out of capitalist society as the object of all its oppressions, incarnating the capitalist negation of humanity. Both Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* and Horkheimer's *Traditional and Critical Theory* contain this conception of the working class. But the proletariat no longer seems 'absolutely' miserable and excluded in the so-called welfare state. The only groups who could still be so described are racial minorities and other outcasts. That is why, in his later works, Marcuse has tried to penetrate deeper into other human needs than economic ones, for he claims that the latter have now become means of integration and oppression. He has therefore turned his attention to the 'biological dimension', to vital instinctive drives, to 'erotic' needs in the broad sense of the term. In doing so he has found a new Negating Subject in the student movement and its refusal of the performance principle, its rejection of an economy based on exchange and competition, and its practice of sexual liberation.

But was the role of the proletariat in Marx's theory ever that of an absolute negation of capitalist society? On the one hand, Marx says explicitly that the social polarization resulting from the immiseration of the working class is crucial to the proletarian revolution (though this need not necessarily take the form of a strictly literal economic pauperization). On the other hand, Marx characterizes the epochal crisis of capitalism by a structural rather than a simply political contradiction, a contradiction between the social character of the productive forces and the private character of the relations of production. In this context, the term 'productive forces' refers to the organizational/technical conditions under which production proceeds—handicrafts, manufacture, machine industry, and automated process industry are different levels of the productive forces. These productive forces, which come into contradiction with the private mode of their appropriation, include the increasing use of science, developed communications, a high educational level and an internalized discipline in the work force. Their effects on the working class are not immiseration but rather the

<sup>46</sup> Lenin's theory of revolution is most clearly elaborated in his *Letters from Afar* and *'Left-Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder*. The incompatibility of his theory with any kind of historicism has been demonstrated by Louis Althusser in his essay 'Contradiction and Overdetermination', *For Marx* (London 1969).

provision of greater facilities for organization and a greater capacity to replace the capitalist regimentation of production by social appropriation and working-class control from below. There is always a social polarization between the working class and the bourgeoisie which arises directly from the fact of exploitation: this is intensified by economic crises induced by the contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production: a revolutionary situation then makes it explosive. Hence Marxist theory does not need a conception of the proletariat as the incarnation of the negation of human existence. A revolutionary situation is a function of the complex development of the social formation, whose different contradictions suddenly fuse in a 'ruptural unity', not of the simple degree of wealth or poverty of the proletariat.<sup>47</sup>

The Marxist concept of the contradiction between the social character of the productive forces and the private character of the relations of production has never been incorporated into historicist interpretations of Marx in a way which preserves the objective character of both aspects of this contradiction as structures of the capitalist mode of production. For the young Lukács, the 'decisive weight' is attached to whether "the greatest force of production" in the capitalist order of production, the proletariat, experiences the crisis as a mere object of the decision, or as its subject'.<sup>48</sup> Here the analysis of the structural pre-conditions for revolution has been spirited away, reducing the forces of production to the proletariat. In fact, this makes the concept itself superfluous: all that matters is the proletariat and its degree of insight into its historical mission, its relationship to class consciousness. The Frankfurt School, on the other hand, has used the concept of the productive forces in another way. They are seen as representing the objective possibility of a new and better society. 'This idea is distinguished from abstract utopia by the proof of its real possibility given by the present level of human productive forces' (KR II, p. 168). The productive forces are not part of a *structural* contradiction, a contradiction between social and private *systems*, which affects class relationships, but are seen as the stage of human evolution which now enables the Negating Subject to abolish poverty and misery from the human condition.<sup>49</sup> It is in this sense that the productive forces are 'neutral', a raw material of potentiality. This neutrality is later denied: from a raw material of potentiality, technology becomes a means of oppression. But in neither case are the forces of production seen in their Marxist structural context. Rather, the analysis slips away from any positive identification of the structures of the capitalist social formation, or of the forces within it capable of transforming that social formation; from Marxist science and politics to philosophy as *Ersatz*

<sup>47</sup> The line of reasoning very summarily outlined here suggests that a careful analysis of the place and implications of the concepts of productive forces and revolutionary situation in Marxist-Leninist theory is a more promising way to tackle the problem than to rely textually on the *Grundrisse* drafts, comparing them with *Capital*, as in Martin Nicolaus's otherwise important essay, 'The Unknown Marx', *New Left Review* 48, 1968.

<sup>48</sup> Lukács, op. cit., p. 421.

<sup>49</sup> See Horkheimer's essay 'Geschichte und Psychologie', where the structural condition is replaced by 'the opposition between the growing powers of men and the social structure' (KR I, p. 17).

science and *Ersatz* politics. Even when apparently anchored in the social structure, the Negating Subject was a philosophical concept; as Révai long ago pointed out in a review of *History and Class Consciousness*, the 'assigned proletarian class consciousness' was merely substituted by Lukács for the Hegelian *Geist*.<sup>50</sup> In the Frankfurt School, this reduction of politics to philosophy has come directly out into the open.

### Anti-Capitalist Revulsion and Socialist Revolution

Before attempting a general historical assessment of the Frankfurt School, let us summarize the argument of this article hitherto. The thought of the School has evolved, and marked divergences between its members have appeared in the years since the War. Nevertheless, there is a persistent underlying structure. This takes the form of a *double reduction of science and of politics to philosophy*. The specificity of Marxism as a theory of social formations and its autonomy as a guide to political action are thereby simultaneously abolished. This first reduction is clearly revealed by the Frankfurt School's theory of fascism, in which a philosophical critique of capitalism replaces a scientific conjunctural analysis of the nature of the Fascist State. The second reduction appears in the conception of the revolutionary agent as a Negating Subject, which cannot be located in social reality, and therefore eventually has to be confined to philosophy, conceived as social reality's opposite.

Since its inception, the Frankfurt School has probably produced more work and covered a wider variety of subjects (many of which could not be dealt with in this short article) than any other comparable group of theorists. Their influence today is probably greater than it has ever been. Yet, as we have seen, the problematic underlying their thought has central and fatal weaknesses. What general verdict can we make of their historical achievement?

The theorists of the Frankfurt School were members of an academic intelligentsia with a high bourgeois background. They came to intellectual maturity in a period of international defeat for the working class, and were cut off from the proletariat of their own country by the Nazi counter-revolution. Like all members of the bourgeoisie, their initiation into a revolutionary position came about through a *revulsion* against capitalist oppression and capitalist ideology's hypocritical denial of that oppression. This revulsion took the form of a direct denunciation of all the nostrums of bourgeois ideology, particularly the economic ideology of free and equal exchange. But just as they adopted these positions, the capitalist system in their country suddenly took on a political form of unparalleled monstrosity with the Nazi seizure of power. This political machine was also a direct threat to themselves and their families. Understandably, fascism became a *Medusa's head* for the Frankfurt School. The result was that the initial attitude of revulsion was *frozen*, instead of developing into a scientific analysis and participation in revolutionary political practice. Sober

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<sup>50</sup> Jozsef Révai: review of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. XI, 1925, pp. 227-236.

political analysis seemed morally impossible; an objective scientific description of Nazism seemed to condone it because it did not condemn it violently in every sentence: in the dark ages, 'A smooth forehead betokens a hard heart' (Brecht).<sup>51</sup> When, to the surprise of most of the School, the monster was destroyed and Nazism was defeated, this attitude had become too fixed for them to make the step from philosophical revulsion to science and politics.

Hence to this day, Frankfurt School thought has never moved from a reflection on its theorists' revulsion from capitalism to a theory of the object of that revulsion and a political practice to transform it. It has therefore been able to develop a powerful and well-articulated anti-capitalist ideology, and this must be numbered among its achievements. It has helped to recapture that dimension of Marx's thought which deals with the qualitative aspects of work and human relations in capitalist society. As one of the School's severest critics, Lucio Colletti, has emphasized, neither the Second International nor the Comintern preserved this dimension. The decisive innovator here was Lukács, but the Frankfurt School has played an almost equally pioneering role, along with Wilhelm Reich, in enriching these ideas by adding a psycho-analytic dimension to them. It has also achieved a series of often brilliant and incisive critiques of bourgeois culture—Adorno's greatest contribution.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, it is this function of Frankfurt theory as a developed reflection of anti-capitalist revulsion which explains the persistence of the School. The combination of institutional continuity and the freezing of a common attitude by the Nazi trauma has preserved it and its basic ideas despite all the changes of the last forty years. Hence it could suddenly re-emerge as something like a magical *anticipation* of the contemporary student movement, which spontaneously rediscovered the same themes in the 'sixties. Just as the Frankfurt School was formed when the revolution was taking place in Russia, but seemed to be absent from Germany, so today it can be seen in Vietnam, Cuba and China, but 'seems' absent from the metropolitan imperialist countries. Students in the West could thus feel cut off from it much as the Frankfurt School did in the 1920's and 1930's. At the same time, the student revolutionary today is a young bourgeois or petty-bourgeois recruit who has discovered the oppressive and murderous nature of imperialism. He or she is revolted. Because of their peculiar historical experience, because of the shock of Nazism, the Frankfurt School have preserved this attitude of revulsion in crystalline fragments, aphorisms and images. Hence the enormous attraction their work still exercises on

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<sup>51</sup> *An die Nachgeborenen*.

<sup>52</sup> This essay has been mainly focused on the work of Horkheimer, chronologically and substantively the 'founder' of the Frankfurt School, with some discussion of the separate itinerary of Marcuse. Comparatively little space has been devoted to Adorno. It should be said, however, that while Adorno's contribution to the main methodological and philosophical themes of the School seems to have been secondary, his specific applications of them are often the most dazzling exercises within the collective oeuvre—perhaps because his chosen fields of music and literature more properly permit a strictly 'critical' analysis—criticism—than social formations or political systems.

those going through the same process. But we must hope that they will not suffer the same fate as the Frankfurt theorists. It is essential to move on from the discovery of the horrors of capitalism to an attempt to understand it scientifically and to unite with the masses in order to overthrow it. If this is not achieved, the Frankfurt School, or a new Anglo-Saxon, Italian, French or Scandinavian branch of it, may have another forty years of paralyzed virtuosity ahead of it.

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Marxists have long recognized the role of the media in the maintenance of the capitalist state and mode of production. But in general, they have failed to examine the contradictions within the media and the consequent opportunities for revolutionary practice they provide. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, poet and editor of 'Kursbuch', a leading journal of the West German left, develops a set of theses about the media in his article. He criticizes the traditionally negative Marxist attitude, provides elements for a new theory, and suggests a revolutionary aesthetic in line with the new technical possibilities, drawing on the ideas of Benjamin and Lissitsky.

The current imposition of martial law in Quebec is only the last stage in a process of repression which has been escalating steadily during recent years. Charles Gagnon, when he was interviewed this summer, had just been released on bail after three and a half years in gaol, although he had not been convicted of any crime. Together with Pierre Vallières—author of 'Nègres Blancs d'Amérique'—he has been the main theorist of the revolutionary wing of the Quebec struggle for national self-determination. A separate commentary introduces the accompanying interview with Cathal Goulding, chief of staff of the IRA. Since the early sixties sections of the IRA have attempted to set their activities within the perspectives of revolutionary socialism. Quebec and Ireland are enclaves in the heart of the imperialist metropolis. The existence of these struggles proves once again that imperialism cannot impose geographical barriers on its contradictions.

In NLR 58 we published an article by David Goddard which outlined the basic problematic of British social anthropology. In this issue, Jairus

Banaji gives an analysis of the rise and fall of its avant-garde—particularly Edmund Leach and Rodney Needham. His analysis hinges on their equivocal relation to Claude Lévi-Strauss, and in the article Jairus Banaji suggests the beginnings of a Marxist approach to the latter.

This month sees the publication of 'Reading Capital' by Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar. Althusser's major work, perhaps the most significant recent contribution to Marxist philosophy is therefore now available to the English reader. But as Althusser stresses, philosophy is always political. He explains the political import of his work in the interview we carry in this issue of NLR.

## THE ISAAC DEUTSCHER MEMORIAL PRIZE

### ANNOUNCEMENT

The undersigned members of the Jury of The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize wish to announce that the Prize for 1970, to the value of £100, has been awarded to Istvan Mészáros for his book *Marx's Theory of Alienation* (Merlin Press, 1970).

Istvan Mészáros was born in Hungary and studied in Budapest and Jena. In November 1956 he took up a teaching post at Turin. While in Italy he wrote, among other works, *La Rivolta degli Intellettuali in Ungheria*. Since 1966 he has been teaching at the University of Sussex. He is also working on a major biographical study of Georg Lukács.

Istvan Mészáros will deliver The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture on 'Alienation and Social Control' at the beginning of the New Year. A further announcement of the date and place of the lecture will be made in due course.

The next Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize will be awarded in the autumn of 1971 and a Jury drawn from among the Sponsors will be glad to consider works published or in typescript submitted by May 1st, 1971 to The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize, c/o Lloyds Bank, 68, Warwick Sq., London SW 1.

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# Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon

## 1

*Can you tell us a little about your personal history? What brought you to Marxist philosophy?*

In 1948, when I was 30, I became a teacher of philosophy and joined the PCF. Philosophy was an interest; I was trying to make it my profession. Politics was passion; I was trying to become a Communist militant.

My interest in philosophy was aroused by materialism and its critical function for *scientific* knowledge, against all the mystifications of *ideological* 'knowledge'. Against the merely moral denunciation of myths and lies, for their rational and rigorous criticism. My passion for politics was inspired by the revolutionary instinct, intelligence, courage and heroism of the working class in its struggle for socialism. The War and the long years of captivity had brought me into living contact with workers and peasants, and acquainted me with Communist militants.

It was politics which decided everything. Not politics in general: Marxist-Leninist politics.

First I had to find them and understand them. That is always extremely difficult for an intellectual. It was just as difficult in the 50's and 60's, for reasons with which you are familiar: the consequences of the 'cult', the Twentieth Congress, then the crisis of the international Communist Movement. Above all, it was not easy to resist the spread of contemporary 'humanist' ideology, and bourgeois ideology's other assaults on Marxism.

Once I had a better understanding of Marxist-Leninist politics, I began to have a passion for philosophy too, for at last I began to understand the great thesis of Marx, Lenin and Gramsci: that philosophy is fundamentally *political*.

Everything that I have written, at first alone, later in collaboration with younger comrades and friends, revolves, despite the 'abstraction' of our essays, around these very concrete questions.

## 2

*Can you be more precise: why is it generally so difficult to be a Communist in philosophy?*

To be a Communist in philosophy is to become a partisan and artisan of Marxist-Leninist philosophy: of dialectical materialism.

It is not easy to become a Marxist-Leninist philosopher. Like every 'intellectual', a philosophy teacher is a petty bourgeois. When he opens his mouth, it is petty-bourgeois ideology that speaks: its resources and ruses are infinite.

You know what Lenin says about 'intellectuals'. Individually certain of them may (politically) be declared *revolutionaries*, and courageous ones. But as a mass, they remain 'incurably' petty-bourgeois in ideology. Gorky himself was, for Lenin, who admired his talents, a *petty-bourgeois* revolutionary. To become 'ideologists of the working class' (Lenin), 'organic intellectuals' of the proletariat (Gramsci), intellectuals have to carry out a radical revolution in their ideas: a long, painful and difficult re-education. An endless external and internal struggle.

Proletarians have a 'class instinct' which helps them on the way to proletarian 'class positions'. Intellectuals, on the contrary, have a petty-bourgeois class instinct which fiercely resists this transition.

A proletarian *class position* is more than a mere proletarian 'class instinct'. It is the consciousness and practice which conform with the *objective* reality of the proletarian class struggle. Class instinct is subjective and spontaneous. Class position is objective and rational. To arrive at proletarian class positions, the class instinct of proletarians only needs to be *educated*; on the contrary, the class instinct of petty-bourgeois, and hence of intellectuals, has to be *revolutionized*. This

education and this revolution are, in the last analysis, determined by proletarian class struggle conducted on the basis of the principles of Marxist-Leninist theory.

As the *Communist Manifesto* says, knowledge of this theory can help *certain* intellectuals to go over to working-class positions.

Marxist-Leninist theory includes a *science* (historical materialism) and a *philosophy* (dialectical materialism).

Marxist-Leninist philosophy is therefore one of the two *theoretical* weapons indispensable to the class struggle of the proletariat. Communist militants must assimilate and use the principles of the theory: science and philosophy. The proletarian revolution needs militants who are both scientists (historical materialism) and philosophers (dialectical materialism) to assist in the defence and development of theory.

The formation of these philosophers runs up against two great difficulties.

A first—*political*—difficulty. A professional philosopher who joins the Party remains, ideologically, a petty-bourgeois. He must revolutionize his thought in order to occupy a proletarian class position in philosophy.

This political difficulty is '*determinant*' in the last instance'.

A second—*theoretical*—difficulty. We know in what direction and with what principles we must work in order to define this class position in *philosophy*. But we must develop Marxist philosophy: it is theoretically and politically urgent to do so. Now, this work is vast and difficult. For in Marxist theory, philosophy has lagged behind the science of history.

Today, in our countries, this is the '*dominant*' difficulty.

### 3

*You therefore distinguish between a science and a philosophy in Marxist theory? As you know, this distinction is often contested today.*

I know. But this 'contestation' is an old story.

To be *extremely* schematic, it may be said that, in the history of the Marxist movement, the suppression of this distinction has expressed either a rightist or a leftist deviation. The rightist deviation suppresses philosophy: only science is left (positivism). The leftist deviation suppresses science: only philosophy is left (subjectivism). There are 'exceptions' to this (cases of 'inversion'), but they 'confirm' the rule.

The great leaders of the Marxist workers' movement from Marx and Engels to today have always said: these deviations are the result of the influence and domination of bourgeois ideology over Marxism. For their part, they always defended the distinction (science, philosophy),

not only for theoretical, *but also* for vital political reasons. Think of Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* or '*Left-Wing*' *Communism*. His reasons are blindingly obvious.

## 4

*How do you justify this distinction between science and philosophy in Marxist theory?*

I shall answer you by formulating a number of provisional and schematic theses.

1. The fusion of Marxist theory and the Workers' Movement is the most important event in the whole history of the class struggle, i.e., in practically the whole of human *history* (first effects: the socialist revolutions).

2. Marxist theory (science and philosophy) represents an unprecedented revolution in the history of human knowledge.

3. Marx founded a new science: the science of history. Let me use an image. The sciences we are familiar with have been installed in a number of great 'continents'. Before Marx, two such continents had been opened up to scientific knowledge: the continent of Mathematics and the continent of Physics. The first by the Greeks (Thales), the second by Galileo. Marx opened up a third continent to scientific knowledge: the continent of History.

4. The opening up of this new continent has induced a revolution in philosophy. That is a law: philosophy is always linked to the sciences.

Philosophy was born (with Plato) at the opening up of the continent of Mathematics. It was transformed (with Descartes) by the opening up of the continent of Physics. Today it is being revolutionized by the opening up of the continent of History by Marx. This revolution is called dialectical materialism.

Transformations of philosophy are always rebounds from great scientific discoveries. Hence *in essentials*, they arise *after the event*. That is why philosophy has lagged behind science in Marxist theory. There are other reasons which we all know about. But at present this is the dominant one.

5. As a mass, only proletarian militants have recognized the revolutionary scope of Marx's scientific discovery. Their political practice has been transformed by it.

And here we come to the greatest *theoretical* scandal in contemporary history.

As a mass, the intellectuals, on the contrary, even those whose 'professional' concern it is (specialists in the human sciences, philosophers), have not really recognized, or have refused to recognize, the unprece-



dented scope of Marx's scientific discovery, which they have condemned and despised, and which they distort when they do discuss it.

*With a few exceptions*, they are still 'dabbling' in political economy, sociology, ethnology, 'anthropology', 'social psychology', etc., etc. . . ., even today, 100 years after *Capital*, just as some *Aristotelian* physicists were still 'dabbling' in physics, 50 years after Galileo. Their 'theories' are ideological anachronisms, rejuvenated with a large dose of intellectual subtleties and ultra-modern mathematical techniques.

But this theoretical scandal is not a scandal at all. It is an effect of the ideological class struggle: for it is bourgeois ideology, bourgeois 'culture' which is in power, which exercises 'hegemony'. As a mass, the intellectuals, including many Communist and Marxist intellectuals, are, *with exceptions*, dominated in their theories by bourgeois ideology. *With exceptions*, the same thing happens in the 'human' sciences.

6. The same scandalous situation in philosophy. Who has understood the astounding philosophical revolution induced by Marx's discovery? Only proletarian militants and leaders. As a mass, on the contrary, professional philosophers have not even suspected it. When they mention Marx it is always, with extremely rare exceptions, to attack him, to condemn him, to 'absorb' him, to exploit him or to *revise* him.

Those, like Engels and Lenin, who have defended dialectical materialism, are treated as philosophically insignificant. The real scandal is that certain Marxist philosophers have succumbed to the same infection, in the name of 'anti-dogmatism'. But here, too, the reason is the same: the effect of the ideological class struggle. For it is bourgeois ideology, bourgeois 'culture', which is in power.

7. The crucial tasks of the Communist movement *in theory*:  
—to recognize and know the revolutionary theoretical scope of Marxist-Leninist science and philosophy.

—to struggle against the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois world outlook which always threatens Marxist theory, and which deeply impregnates it today. The *general* form of this world outlook: *Economism* (today 'technocracy') and its 'spiritual complement' *Ethical Idealism* (today 'Humanism'). Economism and Ethical Idealism have constituted the basic opposition in the bourgeois world outlook since the origins of the bourgeoisie. The current *philosophical* form of this world outlook: *neo-positivism* and its 'spiritual complement' existentialist-phenomenological subjectivism. The variant *peculiar* to the Human Sciences: the *ideology* called 'structuralist'.

—to conquer for science the majority of the Human Sciences, above all, the Social Sciences, which, with exceptions, have occupied as imposters the continent of History, the continent whose keys Marx has given us.

—to develop the new science and philosophy with all the necessary rigour and daring, linking them to the requirements and inventions of the practice of revolutionary class struggle.

In *theory*, the decisive link at present: Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

## 5

*You have said two apparently contradictory or different things: 1—philosophy is basically political; 2—philosophy is linked to the sciences. How do you conceive this double relationship?*

Here again I shall give my answer in the form of schematic and provisional theses.

1. The class positions in confrontation in the class struggle are '*represented*' in the domain of practical ideologies (religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic ideologies) by *world outlooks* of antagonistic tendencies: in the last instance idealist (bourgeois) and materialist (proletarian). Everyone has a world outlook spontaneously.

2. World outlooks are *represented* in the domain of *theory* (science + the 'theoretical' ideologies which surround science and scientists) by *philosophy*. Philosophy represents the class struggle in theory. That is why philosophy is a struggle (*Kampf*, said Kant), and basically a *political* struggle: a class struggle. Everyone is not a philosopher spontaneously, but everyone may become one.

3. Philosophy exists as soon as the theoretical *domain* exists: as soon as *a science* (in the strict sense) exists. Without sciences, no philosophy, only world outlooks. The *stake* in the battle and the *battle-field* must be distinguished. The ultimate stake of philosophical struggle is the struggle for *hegemony* between the two great tendencies in world outlook (materialist and idealist). The *main* battle-field in this struggle is scientific knowledge: for it or against it. The number-one philosophical battle therefore takes place on the frontier between the scientific and the ideological. There the idealist philosophies which exploit the sciences struggle against the materialist philosophies which serve the sciences. The philosophical struggle is a sector of the class struggle between world outlooks. In the past, materialism has always been *dominated* by idealism.

4. The science founded by Marx has changed the whole situation in the theoretical domain. It is a *new* science: the science of history. Therefore, for the first time ever, it has enabled us to know the world outlooks which philosophy represents in theory; it enables us to know philosophy. It provides the means to transform the world outlooks (revolutionary class struggle conducted according to the principles of Marxist theory). Philosophy is therefore doubly revolutionized. Mechanistic materialism, 'idealistic in history', becomes dialectical materialism. The balance of forces is reversed: now materialism can dominate idealism in philosophy, and, if the political conditions are realised, it can carry the class struggle for hegemony between world outlooks.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy, or dialectical materialism, represents the proletarian class struggle *in theory*. In the union of Marxist theory and

the Workers' Movement (the *ultimate* reality of the union of theory and practice) philosophy ceases, as Marx said, to 'interpret the world'. It becomes a weapon with which 'to change it': *revolution*.

## 6

*Are these the reasons which have made you say that it is essential to read Capital today?*

Yes. It is essential to read and study *Capital*.

—in order really to understand, in all its scope and all its scientific and philosophical consequences, what proletarian militants have long understood in practice: the revolutionary character of Marxist theory.

—in order to defend that theory against all the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois interpretations, i.e., revisions, which seriously threaten it today: in the first place the opposition Economism/Humanism.

—in order to develop Marxist theory and produce the scientific concepts indispensable to the analysis of the class struggle today, in our countries and elsewhere.

It is essential to read and study *Capital*. I should add, it is necessary, essential to read and study Lenin, and all the great texts, old and new, to which has been consigned the experience of the class struggle of the international workers' movement. It is essential to study the practical works of the Revolutionary Workers' Movement in their reality, their problems and their contradictions: their past and, above all, their *present* history.

In our countries there are immense resources for the revolutionary class struggle today. But they must be sought where they are: in the exploited masses. They will not be 'discovered' without close contact with the masses, and without the weapons of Marxist-Leninist theory. The bourgeois ideological notions of 'industrial society', 'neo-capitalism', 'new working class', 'affluent society', 'alienation' and *tutti quanti* are anti-scientific and anti-Marxist: built to fight revolutionaries.

I should therefore add one further remark: the most important of all.

In order really to understand what one 'reads' and studies in these theoretical, political and historical works, one must directly experience oneself the two *realities* which determine them through and through: the reality of theoretical practice (science, philosophy) in its concrete life; the reality of the *practice of revolutionary class struggle* in its concrete life, in close contact with the masses. For if theory enables us to understand the laws of history, it is not intellectuals, nor even theoreticians, it is the *masses* who make history. It is essential to learn with theory—but at the same time and crucially, it is essential to learn with the masses.

*You attach a great deal of importance to rigor, including a rigorous vocabulary. Why is that?*

A single word sums up the *master* function of philosophical practice: 'to draw a dividing line' between true ideas and false ideas. Lenin's words.

But the same word sums up one of the essential operations in the direction of the practice of class struggle: 'to draw a dividing line' between the antagonistic classes. Between our class friends and our class enemies.

*It is the same word.* A theoretical dividing line between true ideas and false ideas. A political dividing line between the people (the proletariat and its allies) and the people's enemies.

Philosophy represents the people's class struggle in theory. In return it helps the people to distinguish in *theory* and in all *ideas* (political, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) between true ideas and false ideas. In principle, true ideas always serve the people; false ideas always serve the enemies of the people.

Why does philosophy fight over words? The realities of the class struggle are 'represented' by 'ideas' which are 'represented' by words. In scientific and philosophical reasoning, the words (concepts, categories) are 'instruments' of knowledge. But in political, ideological and philosophical struggle, the words are also weapons, explosives or tranquilizers and poisons. Occasionally, the whole class struggle may be summed up in the struggle for one word against another word. Certain words struggle amongst themselves as enemies. Other words are the site of an *ambiguity*: the stake in a decisive but undecided battle.

*For example:* Communists struggle for the suppression of *classes* and for a communist society, where, one day, all men will be free and brothers. However, the whole classical Marxist tradition has refused to say that Marxism is a *Humanism*. Why? Because *practically*, i.e., in *the facts*, the word Humanism is exploited by an ideology which uses it to fight, i.e., to kill, another, true, word, and one vital to the proletariat: the *class struggle*.

*For example:* revolutionaries know that, in *the last instance*, everything depends not on techniques, weapons, etc., but on militants, on their class consciousness, their devotion and their courage. However, the whole Marxist tradition has refused to say that it is '*man*' who makes history. Why? Because *practically*, i.e., in *the facts*, this expression is exploited by bourgeois ideology which uses it to fight, i.e., to kill, another, true, expression, one vital for the proletariat: *it is the masses who make history*.

At the same time, philosophy, even in the lengthy works where it is most abstract and difficult, fights over words: against lying words, against ambiguous words; for correct words. It fights over 'shades of opinion'.

Lenin said: 'Only short-sighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades of opinion inopportune or superfluous. The fate of Russian Social-Democracy for very many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or the other "shade"' (*What is to be Done?*).

The philosophical fight over words is a part of the political fight. Marxist-Leninist philosophy can only complete its abstract, rigorous and systematic theoretical work on condition that it fights both about very 'scholarly' words (concept, theory, dialectic, alienation, etc.) and about very simple words (man, masses, people, class struggle).

This text reproduces the complete version of an interview with Louis Althusser by the Paris correspondent of L'Unità, Maria Antonietta Macciocchi. It was published in L'Unità on February 1, 1968.

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## Constituents of a theory of the media

If you should think this is Utopian, then  
I would ask you to consider why it is  
Utopian.  
Brecht: *Theory of Radio*

1. With the development of the electronic media, the industry that shapes consciousness has become the pacemaker for the social and economic development of societies in the late industrial age. It infiltrates into all other sectors of production, takes over more and more directional and control functions, and determines the standard of the prevailing technology.

In lieu of normative definitions here is an incomplete list of new developments which have emerged in the last 20 years: news satellites, colour television, cable relay television, cassettes, videotape, videotape recorders, video-phones, stereophony, laser techniques, electrostatic reproduction processes, electronic

high-speed printing, composing and learning machines, microfiches with electronic access, printing by radio, time-sharing computers, data banks. All these new forms of media are constantly forming new connections both with each other and with older media like printing, radio, film, television, telephone, teletype, radar and so on. They are clearly coming together to form a universal system.)\*

The general contradiction between productive forces and productive relationships emerges most sharply, however, when they are most advanced. (By contrast, protracted structural crises as in coal-mining can be solved merely by getting rid of a backlog, that is to say, essentially they can be solved within the terms of their own system and a revolutionary strategy that relied on them would be short-sighted.)

Monopoly capitalism develops the consciousness-shaping industry more quickly and more extensively than other sectors of production; it must at the same time fetter it. A socialist media theory has to work at this contradiction. Demonstrate that it cannot be solved within the given productive relationships—rapidly increasing discrepancies—potential destructive forces. 'Certain demands of a prognostic nature must be made' of any such theory (Benjamin).

(A 'critical' inventory of the *status quo* is not enough. Danger of underestimating the growing conflicts in the media field, of neutralizing them, of interpreting them merely in terms of trade unionism or liberalism, on the lines of traditional labour struggles or as the clash of special interests (programme heads—executive producers, publishers—authors, monopolies—medium sized businesses, public corporations—private companies, etc.). An appreciation of this kind does not go far enough and remains bogged down in tactical arguments.)

So far there is no Marxist theory of the media. There is therefore no strategy one can apply in this area. Uncertainty, alternations between fear and surrender, mark the attitude of the socialist Left to the new productive forces of the media industry. The ambivalence of this attitude merely mirrors the ambivalence of the media themselves without mastering it. It could only be overcome by releasing the emancipatory potential which is inherent in the new productive forces—a potential which capitalism must sabotage just as surely as Soviet revisionism, because it would endanger the rule of both systems.

### The Mobilizing power of the media

2. The open secret of the electronic media, the decisive political factor, which has been waiting, suppressed or crippled, for its moment to come, is their mobilizing power.

(When I say *mobilize* I mean *mobilize*. In a country which has had direct experience of Fascism (and Stalinism) it is perhaps still necessary to explain, or to explain again, what that means—namely, to make men

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\*Illustrative material and slides, originally printed in a smaller type, are here enclosed in brackets.



more mobile than they are. As free as dancers, as aware as football players, as surprising as guerillas. Anyone who thinks of the masses only as the object of politics cannot mobilize them. He wants to push them around. A parcel is not mobile; it can only be pushed to and fro. Marches, columns, parades, immobilize people. Propaganda, which does not release self-reliance but limits it, fits into the same pattern. It leads to de-politicization.)

For the first time in history, the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialized productive process, the practical means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves. Such a use of them would bring the communications media, which up to now have not deserved the name, into their own. In its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver; technically speaking it reduces feedback to the lowest point compatible with the system.

This state of affairs however cannot be justified technically. On the contrary. Electronic techniques recognize no contradiction in principle between transmitter and receiver. Every transistor radio is, by the nature of its construction, at the same time a potential transmitter; it can interact with other receivers by circuit reversal. The development from a mere distribution medium to a communications medium is technically not a problem. It is consciously prevented for understandable political reasons. The technical distinction between receivers and transmitters reflects the social division of labour into producers and consumers, which in the consciousness industry becomes of particular political importance. It is based, in the last analysis, on the basic contradiction between the ruling class and the ruled class—that is to say between monopoly capital or monopolistic bureaucracy on the one hand and the dependent masses on the other.

(This structural analogy can be worked out in detail. To the programmes offered by the broadcasting cartels there correspond the politics offered by a power cartel consisting of parties constituted along authoritarian lines. In both cases marginal differences in their platforms reflect a competitive relationship which on essential questions is non-existent. Minimal independent activity on the part of the voter/viewer. As is the case with parliamentary elections under the two-party system the feedback is reduced to indices. 'Training in decision making' is reduced to the response to a single, three-point switching process: Programme 1; Programme 2; Switch off (abstention).)

'Radio must be changed from a means of distribution to a means of communication. Radio would be the most wonderful means of communication imaginable in public life, a huge linked system—that is to say, it would be such if it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of allowing the listener not only to hear but to speak, and did not isolate him but brought him into contact. Unrealizable in this social system, realizable in another, these proposals, which are, after all, only the natural consequences of technical development, help towards the propagation and shaping of that *other system*.' Bertolt

### The Orwellian Fantasy

3. George Orwell's bogey of a monolithic consciousness industry derives from a view of the media which is undialectical and obsolete. The possibility of total control of such a system at a central point belongs not to the future but to the past. With the aid of systems theory, a discipline which is part of bourgeois science—using, that is to say, categories which are immanent in the system—it can be demonstrated that a linked series of communications or, to use the technical term, switchable network, to the degree that it exceeds a certain critical size, can no longer be centrally controlled but only dealt with statistically. This basic 'leakiness' of stochastic systems admittedly allows the calculation of probabilities based on sampling and extrapolations; but blanket supervision would demand a monitor that was bigger than the system itself. The monitoring of all telephone conversations, for instance, postulates an apparatus which would need to be  $n$  times more extensive and more complicated than that of the present telephone system. A censor's office, which carried out its work extensively, would of necessity become the largest branch of industry in its society.

But supervision on the basis of approximation can only offer inadequate instruments for the self-regulation of the whole system in accordance with the concepts of those who govern it. It postulates a high degree of internal stability. If this precarious balance is upset, then crisis measures based on statistical methods of control are useless. Interference can penetrate the leaky nexus of the media, spreading and multiplying there with the utmost speed by resonance. The régime so threatened will in such cases, insofar as it is still capable of action, use force and adopt police or military methods.

A state of emergency is therefore the only alternative to leakage in the consciousness industry; but it cannot be maintained in the long run. Societies in the late industrial age rely on the free exchange of information; the 'objective pressures' to which their controllers constantly appeal are thus turned against them. Every attempt to suppress the random factors, each diminution of the average flow and each distortion of the information structure must, in the long run, lead to an embolism.

The electronic media have not only built up the information network intensively, they have also spread it extensively. The radio wars of the fifties demonstrated that in the realm of communications, national sovereignty is condemned to wither away. The further development of satellites will deal it the *coup de grâce*. Quarantine regulations for information, such as were promulgated by Fascism and Stalinism, are only possible today at the cost of deliberate industrial regression.

(Example. The Soviet bureaucracy, that is to say the most widespread and complicated bureaucracy in the world, has to deny itself almost

entirely an elementary piece of organizational equipment, the duplicating machine, because this instrument potentially makes everyone a printer. The political risk involved, the possibility of a leakage in the information network, is accepted only at the highest levels, at exposed switchpoints in political, military and scientific areas. It is clear that Soviet society has to pay an immense price for the suppression of its own productive resources—clumsy procedures, misinformation, *faux frais*. The phenomenon incidentally has its analogue in the capitalist West, if in a diluted form. The technically most advanced electrostatic copying machine, which operates with ordinary paper—which cannot, that is to say, be supervised and is independent of suppliers—is the property of a monopoly (Xerox); on principle it is not sold but rented. The rates themselves ensure that it does not get into the wrong hands. The equipment crops up as if by magic where economic and political power are concentrated. Political control of the equipment goes hand in hand with maximization of profits for the manufacturer. Admittedly this control, as opposed to Soviet methods, is by no means 'water-tight' for the reasons indicated.)

The problem of censorship thus enters a new historical stage. The struggle for the freedom of the press and freedom of ideas has, up till now, been mainly an argument within the bourgeoisie itself; for the masses, freedom to express opinions was a fiction since they were, from the beginning, barred from the means of production—above all from the press—and thus were unable to join in freedom of expression from the start. Today censorship is threatened by the productive forces of the consciousness industry which is already, to some extent, gaining the upper hand over the prevailing relations of production. Long before the latter are overthrown, the contradiction between what is possible and what actually exists will become acute.

### Cultural Archaism in the Left Critique

4. The New Left of the sixties has reduced the development of the media to a single concept—that of manipulation. This concept was originally extremely useful for heuristic purposes and has made possible a great many individual analytical investigations, but it now threatens to degenerate into a mere slogan which conceals more than it is able to illuminate, and therefore itself requires analysis.

The current theory of manipulation on the Left is essentially defensive; its effects can lead the movement into defeatism. Subjectively speaking, behind the tendency to go on the defensive lies a sense of impotence. Objectively, it corresponds to the absolutely correct view that the decisive means of production are in enemy hands. But to react to this state of affairs with moral indignation is naïve. There is in general an undertone of lamentation when people speak of manipulation which points to idealistic expectations—as if the class enemy had ever stuck to the promises of fair play it occasionally utters. The liberal superstition that in political and social questions there is such a thing as pure, unmanipulated truth, seems to enjoy remarkable currency among the socialist Left. It is the unspoken basic premise of the manipulation thesis.

This thesis provides no incentive to push ahead. A socialist perspective which does not go beyond attacking existing property relationships is limited. The expropriation of Springer is a desirable goal but it would be good to know to whom the media should be handed over. The Party? To judge by all experience of that solution, it is not a possible alternative. It is perhaps no accident that the Left has not yet produced an analysis of the pattern of manipulation in countries with socialist régimes.

The manipulation thesis also serves to exculpate oneself. To cast the enemy in the role of the devil is to conceal the weakness and lack of perspective in one's own agitation. If the latter leads to self-isolation instead of mobilizing the masses, then its failure is attributed holus-bolus to the overwhelming power of the media.

The theory of repressive tolerance has also permeated discussion of the media by the Left. This concept, which was formulated by its author with the utmost care, has also, when whittled away in an undialectical manner, become a vehicle for resignation. Admittedly, when an office-equipment firm can attempt to recruit sales staff with the picture of Che Guevara and the text *We would have hired him*, the temptation to withdraw is great. But fear of handling shit is a luxury a sewer-man cannot necessarily afford.

The electronic media do away with cleanliness; they are by their nature 'dirty'. That is part of their productive power. In terms of structure, they are anti-sectarian—a further reason why the Left, insofar as it is not prepared to re-examine its traditions, has little idea what to do with them. The desire for a cleanly defined 'line' and for the suppression of 'deviations' is anachronistic and now serves only one's own need for security. It weakens one's own position by irrational purges, exclusions and fragmentation, instead of strengthening it by rational discussion.

These resistances and fears are strengthened by a series of cultural factors which, for the most part, operate unconsciously, and which are to be explained by the social history of the participants in today's Left movement—namely their bourgeois class background. It often seems as if it were precisely because of their progressive potential that the media are felt to be an immense threatening power; because for the first time they present a basic challenge to bourgeois culture and thereby to the privileges of the bourgeois intelligentsia—a challenge far more radical than any self-doubt this social group can display. In the New Left's opposition to the media, old bourgeois fears such as the fear of 'the masses' seem to be reappearing along with equally old bourgeois longings for pre-industrial times dressed up in progressive clothing.

(At the very beginning of the student revolt, during the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, the computer was a favourite target for aggression. Interest in the Third World is not always free from motives based on antagonism towards civilization which has its source in conservative culture critique. During the May events in Paris the reversion to archaic forms of production was particularly characteristic. Instead of

carrying out agitation among the workers in a modern offset press, the students printed their posters on the hand presses of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The political slogans were hand-painted; stencils would certainly have made it possible to produce them *en masse*, but it would have offended the creative imagination of the authors. The ability to make proper strategic use of the most advanced media was lacking. It was not the radio headquarters that were seized by the rebels, but the Odéon Theatre, steeped in tradition.)

The obverse of this fear of contact with the media is the fascination they exert on left-wing movements in the great cities. On the one hand, the comrades take refuge in outdated forms of communication and esoteric arts and crafts instead of occupying themselves with the contradiction between the present constitution of the media and their revolutionary potential; on the other hand, they cannot escape from the consciousness industry's programme or from its aesthetic. This leads, subjectively, to a split between a puritanical view of political action and the area of private 'leisure'; objectively, it leads to a split between politically active groups and sub-cultural groups.

In Western Europe the socialist movement mainly addresses itself to a public of converts through newspapers and journals which are exclusive in terms of language, content, and form. These news-sheets presuppose a structure of party members and sympathizers and a situation, where the media are concerned, that roughly corresponds to the historical situation in 1900; they are obviously fixated on the *Iskra* model. Presumably the people who produce them listen to the Rolling Stones, follow occupations and strikes on television, and go to the cinema to see a Western or a Godard; only in their capacity as producers do they make an exception, and, in their analyses, the whole media sector is reduced to the slogan of 'manipulation'. Every foray into this territory is regarded from the start with suspicion as a step towards integration. This suspicion is not unjustified; it can however also mask one's own ambivalence and insecurity. Fear of being swallowed up by the system is a sign of weakness; it presupposes that capitalism could overcome any contradiction—a conviction which can easily be refuted historically and is theoretically untenable.

If the socialist movement writes off the new productive forces of the consciousness industry and relegates work on the media to a sub-culture, then we have a vicious circle. For the Underground may be increasingly aware of the technical and aesthetic possibilities of the disc, of videotape, of the electronic camera, and so on, and is systematically exploring the terrain, but it has no political viewpoint of its own and therefore mostly falls a helpless victim to commercialism. The politically active groups then point to such cases with smug *Schadenfreude*. A process of un-learning is the result and both sides are the losers. Capitalism alone benefits from the Left's antagonism to the media, as it does from the de-politicization of the counter-culture.

### Democratic Manipulation

5. Manipulation—etymologically, handling—means technical treat-

ment of a given material with a particular goal in mind. When the technical intervention is of immediate social relevance, then manipulation is a political act. In the case of the media industry that is by definition the case.

Thus every use of the media presupposes manipulation. The most elementary processes in media production, from the choice of the medium itself to shooting, cutting, synchronization, dubbing, right up to distribution, are all operations carried out on the raw material. There is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting. The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated, but who manipulates them. A revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear; on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator.

All technical manipulations are potentially dangerous; the manipulation of the media cannot be countered, however, by old or new forms of censorship, but only by direct social control, that is to say, by the mass of the people, who will have become productive. To this end, the elimination of capitalistic property relationships is a necessary, but by no means sufficient condition. There have been no historical examples up until now of the mass self-regulating learning process which is made possible by the electronic media. The Communists' fear of releasing this potential, of the mobilizing capabilities of the media, of the interaction of free producers, is one of the main reasons why even in the socialist countries, the old bourgeois culture, greatly disguised and distorted but structurally intact, continues to hold sway.

(As a historical explanation it may be pointed out that the consciousness industry in Russia at the time of the October Revolution was extraordinarily backward; their productive capacity has grown enormously since then, but the productive relationships have been artificially preserved, often by force. Then, as now, a primitively edited press, books and theatre, were the key media in the Soviet Union. The development of radio, film and television, is politically arrested. Foreign stations like the BBC, the Voice of America, and the *Deutschland Welle*, therefore, not only find listeners, but are received with almost boundless faith. Archaic media like the handwritten pamphlet and poems orally transmitted play an important role.)

6. The new media are egalitarian in structure. Anyone can take part in them by a simple switching process. The programmes themselves are not material things and can be reproduced at will. In this sense the electronic media are entirely different from the older media like the book or the easel-painting, the exclusive class character of which is obvious. Television programmes for privileged groups are certainly technically conceivable—closed-circuit television—but run counter to the structure. Potentially the new media do away with all educational privileges and thereby with the cultural monopoly of the bourgeois intelligentsia. This is one of the reasons for the intelligentsia's resentment against the new industry. As for the 'spirit' which they are endeavouring to defend against 'depersonalization' and 'mass culture', the sooner they abandon it the better.

## Properties of the new media

7. The new media are orientated towards action, not contemplation; towards the present, not tradition. Their attitude to time is completely opposed to that of bourgeois culture which aspires to possession, that is to extension in time, best of all, to eternity. The media produce no objects that can be hoarded and auctioned. They do away completely with 'intellectual property' and liquidate the 'heritage', that is to say, the class specific handing-on of non-material capital.

That does not mean to say that they have no history or that they contribute to the loss of historical consciousness. On the contrary, they make it possible for the first time to record historical material so that it can be reproduced at will. By making this material available for present-day purposes, they make it obvious to anyone using it that the writing of history is always manipulation. But the memory they hold in readiness is not the preserve of a scholarly caste. It is social. The banked information is accessible to anyone and this accessibility is as instantaneous as its recording. It suffices to compare the model of a private library with that of a socialized data bank to recognize the structural difference between the two systems.

8. It is wrong to regard media equipment as mere means of consumption. It is always, in principle, also means of production and, indeed, since it is in the hands of the masses, socialized means of production. The contradiction between producers and consumers is not inherent in the electronic media; on the contrary, it has to be artificially reinforced by economic and administrative measures.

(An early example of this is provided by the difference between telegraph and telephone. Whereas the former, to this day, has remained in the hands of a bureaucratic institution which can scan and file every text transmitted, the telephone is directly accessible to all users. With the aid of conference circuits, it can even make possible collective intervention in a discussion by physically remote groups.

On the other hand those auditory and visual means of communication which rely on 'wireless' are still subject to state control (legislation on wireless installations). In the face of technical developments, which long ago made local and international radio-telephony possible, and which constantly opened up new wavebands for television—in the UHF band alone, the dissemination of numerous programmes in one locality is possible without interference, not to mention the possibilities offered by wired and satellite television—the prevailing laws for control of the air are anachronistic. They recall the time when the operation of a printing press was dependent on an imperial license. The socialist movements will take up the struggle for their own wavelengths and must, within the foreseeable future, build their own transmitters and relay stations.)

9. One immediate consequence of the structural nature of the new media is that none of the régimes at present in power can release their potential. Only a free socialist society will be able to make them fully productive. A further characteristic of the most advanced media—

probably the decisive one—confirms this thesis: their collective structure.

For the prospect that in future, with the aid of the media, anyone can become a producer, would remain apolitical and limited were this productive effort to find an outlet in individual tinkering. Work on the media is possible for an individual only in so far as it remains socially and therefore aesthetically irrelevant. The collection of transparencies from the last holiday trip provides a model.

That is naturally what the prevailing market mechanisms have aimed at. It has long been clear from apparatus like miniature and 8 mm cine cameras, as well as the tape recorder, which are in actual fact already in the hands of the masses, that the individual, so long as he remains isolated, can become with their help at best an amateur but not a producer. Even so potent a means of production as the shortwave transmitter has been tamed in this way and reduced to a harmless and inconsequential hobby in the hands of scattered radio hams. The programmes which the isolated amateur mounts are always only bad, outdated copies of what he in any case receives.

(Private production for the media is no more than licensed cottage industry. Even when it is made public it remains pure compromise. To this end, the men who own the media have developed special programmes which are usually called 'Democratic Forum' or something of the kind. There, tucked away in the corner, 'the reader (listener, viewer) has his say', which can naturally be cut short at any time. As in the case of public opinion polling, he is only asked questions so that he may have a chance to confirm his own dependence. It is a control circuit where what is fed in has already made complete allowance for the feedback.)

The concept of a licence can also be used in another sense—in an economic one; the system attempts to make each participant into a concessionaire of the monopoly that develops his films or plays back his cassettes. The aim is to nip in the bud in this way that independence which video-equipment, for instance, makes possible. Naturally, such tendencies go against the grain of the structure and the new productive forces not only permit but indeed demand their reversal.)

The poor, feeble and frequently humiliating results of this licensed activity are often referred to with contempt by the professional media producers. On top of the damage suffered by the masses comes triumphant mockery because they clearly do not know how to use the media properly. The sort of thing that goes on in certain popular television shows is taken as proof that they are completely incapable of articulating on their own.

Not only does this run counter to the results of the latest psychological and pedagogical research, but it can easily be seen to be a reactionary protective formulation; the 'gifted' people are quite simply defending their territories. Here we have a cultural analogue to the familiar political judgments concerning a working class which is presumed to be 'stultified' and incapable of any kind of self-determination. Curiously, one may hear the view that the masses could never govern themselves



out of the mouths of people who consider themselves socialists. In the best of cases, these are economists who cannot conceive of socialism as anything other than nationalization.

### A Socialist Strategy

10. Any socialist strategy for the media must, on the contrary, strive to end the isolation of the individual participants from the social learning and production process. This is impossible unless those concerned organize themselves. This is the political core of the question of the media. It is over this point that socialist concepts part company with the neo-liberal and technocratic ones. Anyone who expects to be emancipated by technological hardware, or by a system of hardware however structured, is the victim of an obscure belief in progress. Anyone who imagines that freedom for the media will be established if only everyone is busy transmitting and receiving is the dupe of a liberalism which, decked out in contemporary colours, merely peddles the faded concepts of a pre-ordained harmony of social interests.

In the face of such illusions, what must be firmly held on to is that the proper use of the media demands organization and makes it possible. Every production that deals with the interests of the producers postulates a collective method of production. It is itself already a form of self-organization of social needs. Tape recorders, ordinary cameras and cine cameras, are already extensively owned by wage-earners. The question is why these means of production do not turn up at workplaces, in schools, in the offices of the bureaucracy, in short, everywhere where there is social conflict. By producing aggressive forms of publicity which were their own, the masses could secure evidence of their daily experiences and draw effective lessons from them.

Naturally bourgeois society defends itself against such prospects with a battery of legal measures. It bases itself on the law of trespass, on commercial and official secrecy. While its secret services penetrate everywhere and plug in to the most intimate conversations, it pleads a touching concern for confidentiality, and makes a sensitive display of worrying about the question of a privacy in which all that is private is the interest of the exploiters. Only a collective, organized effort can tear down these paper walls.

Communication networks which are constructed for such purposes can, over and above their primary function, provide politically interesting organizational models. In the socialist movements the dialectic of discipline and spontaneity, centralism and decentralization, authoritarian leadership and anti-authoritarian disintegration has long ago reached deadlock. Network-like communications models built on the principle of reversability of circuits might give indications of how to overcome this situation: a mass newspaper, written and distributed by its readers, a video network of politically active groups.

More radically than any good intention, more lastingly than existential flight from one's own class, the media, once they have come into their

own, destroy the private production methods of bourgeois intellectuals. Only in productive work and learning processes can their individualism be broken down in such a way that it is transformed from morally based (that is to say as individual as ever) self-sacrifice to a new kind of political self understanding and behaviour.

11. An all too widely disseminated thesis maintains that present-day capitalism lives by the exploitation of unreal needs. That is at best a half-truth. The results obtained by popular American sociologists like Vance Packard are not unuseful but limited. What they have to say about the stimulation of needs through advertising and artificial obsolescence can in any case not be adequately explained by the hypnotic pull exerted on the wage-earners by mass consumption. The hypothesis of 'consumer terror' corresponds to the prejudices of a middle class, which considers itself politically enlightened, against the allegedly integrated proletariat, which has become petty-bourgeois and corrupt. The attractive power of mass consumption is based not on the dictates of false needs, but on the falsification and exploitation of quite real and legitimate ones without which the parasitic process of advertising would be redundant. A socialist movement ought not to denounce these needs, but take them seriously, investigate them and make them politically productive.

That is also valid for the consciousness industry. The electronic media do not owe their irresistible power to any sleight-of-hand but to the elemental power of deep social needs which come through even in the present depraved form of these media.

Precisely because no one bothers about them, the interests of the masses have remained a relatively unknown field, at least insofar as they are historically new. They certainly extend far beyond those goals which the traditional working class movement represented. Just as in the field of production, the industry which produces goods and the consciousness industry merge more and more, so too, subjectively, where needs are concerned, material and non-material factors are closely interwoven. In the process old psycho-social themes are firmly embedded—social prestige, identification patterns—but powerful new themes emerge which are utopian in nature. From a materialistic point of view neither the one nor the other must be suppressed.

Henri Lefebvre has proposed the concept of the *spectacle*, the exhibition, the show, to fit the present form of mass consumption. Goods and shop windows, traffic and advertisements, stores and the world of communications, news and packaging, architecture and media production come together to form a totality, a permanent theatre, which dominates not only the public city centres but also private interiors. The expression 'beautiful living' makes the most commonplace objects of general use into props for this universal festival, in which the fetishistic nature of the commodities triumphs completely over their use value. The swindle these festivals perpetrate is, and remains, a swindle within the present social structure. But it is the harbinger of something else. Consumption as spectacle contains the promise that want will disappear. The deceptive, brutal and obscene

features of this festival derive from the fact that there can be no question of a real fulfillment of its promise. But so long as scarcity holds sway, use-value remains a decisive category which can only be abolished by trickery. Yet trickery on such a scale is only conceivable if it is based on mass need. This need—it is a utopian one—is there. It is the desire for a new ecology, for a breaking-down of environmental barriers, for an aesthetic which is not limited to the sphere of 'the artistic'. These desires are not—or are not primarily—internalized rules of the game as played by the capitalist system. They have physiological roots and can no longer be suppressed. Consumption as spectacle is—in parody form—the anticipation of a Utopian situation.

The promises of the media demonstrate the same ambivalence. They are an answer to the mass need for non-material variety and mobility—which at present finds its material realization in private car-ownership and tourism—and they exploit it. Other collective wishes, which capital often recognizes more quickly and evaluates more correctly than its opponents but naturally only so as to trap them and rob them of their explosive force, are just as powerful, just as unequivocally emancipatory: the need to take part in the social process on a local, national and international scale; the need for new forms of interaction, for release from ignorance and tutelage; the need for self-determination. 'Be everywhere!' is one of the most successful slogans of the media industry. 'The readers' parliament of *Bild-Zeitung*\*: direct democracy used against the interests of the *demos*. 'Open spaces' and 'free time'—concepts which corral and neutralize the urgent wishes of the masses.

(The corresponding acceptance by the media of utopian stories. E.g. the story of the young Italo-American who hijacked a passenger plane to get home from California to Rome was taken up without protest even by the reactionary mass press and undoubtedly correctly understood by its readers. The identification is based on what has become a general need. Nobody can understand why such journeys should be reserved for politicians, functionaries, and business men. The role of the pop star could be analysed from a similar angle; in it the authoritarian and emancipatory factors are mingled in an extraordinary way. It is perhaps not unimportant that beat music offers groups, not individuals, as identification models. In the productions of the Rolling Stones (and in the manner of their production) the utopian content is apparent. Events like the Woodstock Festival, the concerts in Hyde Park, on the Isle of Wight, and at Altamont, California, develop a mobilizing power which the political Left can only envy.)

It is absolutely clear that, within the present social forms, the consciousness industry can satisfy none of the needs on which it lives and which it must fan, except in the illusory form of games. The point, however, is not to demolish its promises but to take them literally and to show that they can be met only through a cultural revolution. Socialists and socialist régimes which multiply the frustration of the

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\* The Springer press mass publication.

masses by declaring their needs to be false, become the accomplices of the system they have undertaken to fight.

## 12. Summary.

<i>Repressive use of media</i>	<i>Emancipatory use of media</i>
Centrally controlled programme	Decentralized programme
One transmitter, many receivers	Each receiver a potential transmitter
Immobilization of isolated individuals	Mobilization of the masses
Passive consumer behaviour	Interaction of those involved, feedback
Depoliticization	A political learning process
Production by specialists	Collective production
Control by property owners or bureaucracy	Social control by self-organization

## The Subversive Power of the New Media

13. As far as the objectively subversive potentialities of the electronic media are concerned, both sides in the international class struggle—except for the fatalistic adherents of the thesis of manipulation in the metropolises—are of one mind. Frantz Fanon was the first to draw attention to the fact that the transistor receiver was one of the most important weapons in the Third World's fight for freedom. Albert Hertzog, ex-Minister of the South African Republic and the mouth-piece of the right wing of the ruling party, is of the opinion that 'television will lead to the ruin of the white man in South Africa' (*Der Spiegel* 20/10/1969). American imperialism has recognized the situation. It attempts to meet the 'revolution of rising expectations' in Latin America—that is what its ideologues call it—by scattering its own transmitters all over the continent and into the remotest regions of the Amazon basin, and by distributing single-frequency transistors to the native population. The attacks of the Nixon Administration on the capitalist media in the USA reveals its understanding that their reporting, however one-sided and distorted, has become a decisive factor in mobilizing people against the war in Vietnam. Whereas only 25 years ago the French massacres in Madagascar, with almost one hundred thousand dead, became known only to the readers of *Le Monde* under the heading of 'Other News' and therefore remained unnoticed and without sequel in the capital city, today the media drag colonial wars into the centres of imperialism.

The direct mobilizing potentialities of the media become still more clear when they are consciously used for subversive ends. Their presence is a factor that immensely increases the demonstrative nature of any political act. The student movements in the USA, in Japan, and in Western Europe soon recognized this and, to begin with, achieved considerable momentary successes with the aid of the media. These effects have worn off. Naïve trust in the magical power of reproduction cannot replace organizational work; only active and coherent groups can force the media to comply with the logic of their actions. That can be demonstrated from the example of the Tupamaros

in Uruguay, whose revolutionary practice has implicit in it publicity for their actions. Thus the actors become authors. The abduction of the American Ambassador in Rio de Janeiro was planned with a view to its impact on the media. It was a television production. The Arab guerillas proceed in the same way. The first to experiment with these techniques internationally were the Cubans. Fidel appreciated the revolutionary potential of the media correctly from the first (Moncada 1953). Today illegal political action demands at one and the same time maximum security and maximum publicity.

14. Revolutionary situations always bring with them discontinuous, spontaneous changes brought about by the masses in the existing aggregate of the media. How far the changes thus brought about take root and how permanent they are demonstrates the extent to which a cultural revolution is successful. The situation in the media is the most accurate and sensitive barometer for the rise of bureaucratic or bonapartist anticyclones. So long as the cultural revolution has the initiative, the social imagination of the masses overcomes even technical backwardness and transforms the function of the old media so that their structures are exploded. 'With our work the Revolution has achieved a colossal labour of propaganda and enlightenment. We ripped up the traditional book into single pages, magnified these a hundred times, printed them in colour and stuck them up as posters in the streets . . . Our lack of printing equipment and the necessity for speed meant that, though the best work was hand-printed, the most rewarding was standardized, lapidary and adapted to the simplest mechanical form of reproduction. Thus State Decrees were printed as rolled-up illustrated leaflets, and Army Orders as illustrated pamphlets' (El Lissitzky, *The Future of the Book*, New Left Review, No. 41, p. 42.). In the twenties, the Russian film reached a standard that was far in advance of the available productive forces. Pudovkin's *Kinoglas* and Dziga Vertov's *Kinopravda* were no 'newsreels' but political television magazine programmes *avant l'écran*. The campaign against illiteracy in Cuba broke through the linear, exclusive, and isolating structure of the medium of the book. In the China of the Cultural Revolution, wall newspapers functioned like an electronic mass medium—at least in the big towns. The resistance of the Czechoslovak population to the Soviet invasion gave rise to spontaneous productivity on the part of the masses, which ignored the institutional barriers of the media. (Details to be supplied.) Such situations are exceptional. It is precisely their utopian nature, which reaches out beyond the existing productive forces (it follows that the productive relationships are not to be permanently overthrown), that makes them precarious, leads to reversals and defeats. They demonstrate all the more clearly what enormous political and cultural energies are hidden in the enchained masses and with what imagination they are able, at the moment of liberation, to realize all the opportunities offered by the new media.

### **The Media: an empty category of Marxist Theory**

15. That the Marxist Left should argue theoretically and act practically from the standpoint of the most advanced productive forces in their society, that they should develop in depth all the liberating factors immanent in these forces and use them strategically, is no academic

expectation but a political necessity. However, with a single great exception, that of Walter Benjamin (and in his footsteps, Brecht), Marxists have not understood the consciousness industry and have been aware only of its bourgeois-capitalist dark side and not of its socialist possibilities. An author like Georg Lukács is a perfect example of this theoretical and practical backwardness. Nor are the works of Horkheimer and Adorno free of a nostalgia which clings to early bourgeois media.

(Their view of the cultural industry cannot be discussed here. Much more typical of Marxism between the two wars is the position of Lukács, which can be seen very clearly from an early essay on 'Old Culture and New Culture' (*Kommunismus, Zeitschrift der Kommunistischen Internationale für die Länder Südosteuropas*, 1920 pp. 1538-49). 'Anything that culture produces', can according to Lukács, 'have real cultural value only if it is in itself valuable, if the creation of each individual product is from the standpoint of its maker a single, finite process. It must, moreover, be a process conditioned by the human potentialities and capabilities of the creator. The most typical example of such a process is the work of art, where the entire genesis of the work is exclusively the result of the artist's labour and each detail of the work that emerges is determined by the individual qualities of the artist. In highly developed mechanical industry on the other hand, any connection between the product and the creator is abolished. *The human being serves the machine, he adapts to it.* Production becomes completely independent of the human potentialities and capabilities of the worker.' These 'forces which destroy culture' impair the work's 'truth to the material', its 'level', and deal the final blow to the 'work as an end in itself'. There is no more question of 'the organic unity of the products of culture, its harmonious, joy-giving being'. Capitalist culture must lack 'the simple and natural harmony and beauty of the old culture—culture in the true, literal sense of the word.' Fortunately things need not remain so. The 'culture of proletarian society' although 'in the context of such scientific research as is possible at this time' nothing more can be said about it, will certainly remedy these ills. Lukács asks himself 'which are the cultural values which, in accordance with the nature of this context, *can be taken over from the old society* by the new and further developed.' Answer: Not the inhuman machines but 'the idea of mankind as an end in itself, the basic idea of the new culture', for it is 'the inheritance of the classical idealism of the nineteenth century'. Quite right. 'This is where the philistine concept of *art* turns up with all its deadly obtuseness—an idea to which all technical considerations are foreign and which feels that with the provocative appearance of the new technology its end has come' (Walter Benjamin: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie in Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Frankfurt 1963 p. 69).

These nostalgic backward glances at the landscape of the last century, these reactionary ideals, are already the forerunners of socialist realism, which mercilessly galvanized and then buried those very 'cultural values', which Lukács rode out to rescue. Unfortunately, in the process, the Soviet cultural revolution was thrown to the wolves; but this aesthete can in any case hardly have thought any more highly of it than did J. V. Stalin.)

The inadequate understanding which Marxists have shown of the media and the questionable use they have made of them has produced a vacuum in Western industrialized countries into which a stream of non-Marxist hypotheses and practices has consequently flowed. From the Cabaret Voltaire to Andy Warhol's Factory, from the silent film comedians to the Beatles, from the first comic-strip artists to the present managers of the Underground, the apolitical have made much more radical progress in dealing with the media than any grouping of the Left. (Exception—Münzenberg). Innocents have put themselves in the forefront of the new productive forces on the basis of mere intuitions with which communism—to its detriment—has not wished to concern itself. Today this apolitical avant-garde has found its ventriloquist and prophet in Marshall McLuhan, an author who admittedly lacks any analytical categories for the understanding of social processes, but whose confused books serve as a quarry of undigested observations for the media industry. Certainly his little finger has experienced more of the productive power of the new media than all the ideological commissions of the CPSU and their endless resolutions and directives put together.

Incapable of any theoretical construction, McLuhan does not present his material as a concept but as the common denominator of a reactionary doctrine of salvation. He admittedly did not invent but was the first to formulate explicitly a mystique of the media which dissolves all political problems in smoke—the same smoke as gets in the eyes of his followers. It promises the salvation of man through the technology of television and indeed of television as it is practised today. Now McLuhan's attempt to stand Marx on his head is not exactly new. He shares with his numerous predecessors the determination to suppress all problems of the economic base, their idealistic tendencies and their belittling of the class struggle in the naïve terms of a vague humanism. A new Rousseau, like all copies only a pale version of the old, he preaches the gospel of the new primitive man who, naturally on a higher level, must return to prehistoric tribal existence in the 'global village'.

It is scarcely worthwhile to deal with such concepts. This charlatan's most famous saying—'the medium is the message'—perhaps deserves more attention. In spite of its provocative idiocy, it betrays more than its author knows. It reveals in the most accurate way the tautological nature of the mystique of the media. The one remarkable thing about the television set, according to him, is that it moves—a thesis which in view of the nature of American programmes has, admittedly, something attractive about it.

(The complementary mistake consists in the widely spread illusion that media are neutral instruments with which any 'messages' one pleases can be transmitted without regard for their structure or for the structure of the medium. In the East European countries the television newscasters read 15-minute-long conference communiqués and Central Committee resolutions which are not even suitable for printing in a newspaper, clearly under the delusion that they might fascinate a public of millions.)

The sentence—the medium is the message—transmits yet another message, however, and a much more important one. It tells us that the bourgeoisie does indeed have all possible means at its disposal to communicate something to us, but that it has nothing more to say. It is ideologically sterile. Its intention to hold on to the control of the means of production at any price, while being incapable of making the socially necessary use of them is here expressed with complete frankness in the superstructure. It wants the media *as such* and *to my purpose*.

This wish has been shared for decades and given symbolical expression by an artistic avant-garde whose programme logically admits only the alternative of negative signals and amorphous noise. Example: the meanwhile outdated 'literature of silence', Warhol's films in which everything can happen at once or nothing at all and John Cage's 45-minute-long *Lecture on Nothing* (1959).

### The Achievement of Benjamin

16. The revolution in the conditions of production in the superstructure has made the traditional aesthetic theory unusable, completely unhinging its fundamental categories and destroying its 'standards'. The theory of knowledge on which it was based is outmoded. In the electronic media, a radically altered relationship between subject and object emerges with which the old critical concepts cannot deal. The idea of the self-sufficient work of art collapsed long ago. The long drawn discussion over the death of art proceeds in a circle so long as it does not examine critically the aesthetic concept on which it is based, so long as it employs criteria which no longer correspond to the state of the productive forces. When constructing an aesthetic adapted to the changed situation, one must take as a starting point the work of the only Marxist theoretician who recognized the liberating potential of the new media. Thirty-five years ago, that is to say, at a time when the consciousness industry was relatively undeveloped, Walter Benjamin subjected this phenomenon to a penetrating dialectical-materialist analysis. His approach has not been matched by any theory since then, far less further developed.

'One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence and in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage.'

'For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an-



ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. . . . But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics. . . . Today, by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value, the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental' ('The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, London 1970, pp. 223–7).

The trends which Benjamin recognized in his day in the film and the true import of which he grasped theoretically, have become patent today with the rapid development of the consciousness industry. What used to be called art, has now, in the strict Hegelian sense, been dialectically surpassed by and in the media. The quarrel about the end of art is otiose so long as this end is not understood dialectically. Artistic productivity reveals itself to be the extreme marginal case of a much more widespread productivity, and it is socially important only insofar as it surrenders all pretensions to autonomy and recognizes itself to be a marginal case. Wherever the professional producers make a virtue out of the necessity of their specialist skills and even derive a privileged status from them, their experience and knowledge have become useless. This means that as far as an aesthetic theory is concerned, a radical change in perspectives is needed. Instead of looking at the productions of the new media from the point of view of the older modes of production we must, on the contrary, analyse the products of the traditional 'artistic' media from the standpoint of modern conditions of production.

('Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question—whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art—was not raised. Soon the film theoreticians asked the same ill-considered question with regard to the film. But the difficulties which photography caused traditional aesthetics were mere child's play as compared to those raised by the film.'—*ibid.*, p. 229.)

The panic aroused by such a shift in perspectives is understandable. The process not only changes the old burdensome craft secrets in the superstructure into white elephants, it also conceals a genuinely destructive element. It is, in a word, risky. But the only chance for the aesthetic tradition lies in its dialectical supersession. In the same way, classical physics has survived as a marginal special case within the framework of a much more comprehensive theory.

This state of affairs can be identified in individual cases in all the traditional artistic disciplines. Their present-day developments remain incomprehensible so long as one attempts to deduce them from their own prehistory. On the other hand, their usefulness or otherwise can be judged as soon as one regards them as special cases in a general aesthetic of the media. Some indications of the possible critical

approaches which stem from this will be made below, taking literature as an example.

### The Supersession of Written Culture

17. Written literature has, historically speaking, played a dominant role for only a few centuries. Even today, the predominance of the book has an episodic air. An incomparably longer time preceded it in which literature was oral. Now it is being succeeded by the age of the electronic media which tend once more to make people speak. At its period of fullest development the book to some extent usurped the place of the more primitive but generally more accessible methods of production of the past; on the other hand, it was a stand-in for future methods which make it possible for everyone to become a producer.

The revolutionary role of the printed book has been described often enough and it would be absurd to deny it. From the point of view of its structure as a medium, written literature, like the bourgeoisie who produced it and whom it served, was progressive. (See the *Communist Manifesto*.) On the analogy of the economic development of capitalism, which was indispensable for the development of the industrial revolution, the non-material productive forces could not have developed without their own capital accumulation. (We also owe the accumulation of *Das Kapital* and its teachings to the medium of the book.)

Nevertheless, almost everybody speaks better than he writes. (This also applies to authors.) Writing is a highly formalized technique which, in purely physiological terms, demands a peculiarly rigid bodily posture. To this there corresponds the high degree of social specialization that it demands. Professional writers have always tended to think in caste terms. The class character of their work is unquestionable, even in the age of universal compulsory education. The whole process is extraordinarily beset with taboos. Spelling mistakes, which are completely immaterial in terms of communication, are punished by the social disqualification of the writer. The rules that govern this technique have a normative power attributed to them for which there is no rational basis. Intimidation through the written word has remained a widespread and class-specific phenomenon even in advanced industrial societies.

These alienating factors cannot be eradicated from written literature. They are reinforced by the methods by which society transmits its writing techniques. While people learn to speak very early, and mostly in psychologically favourable conditions, learning to write forms an important part of authoritarian socialization by the school ('good writing' as a kind of breaking-in). This sets its stamp for ever on written communication—on its tone, its syntax, and its whole style. (This also applies to the text on this page.)

The formalization of written language permits and encourages the repression of opposition. In speech, unresolved contradictions betray themselves by pauses, hesitations, slips of the tongue, repetitions,

anacoluthons, quite apart from phrasing, mimicry, gesticulation, pace and volume. The aesthetic of written literature scorns such involuntary factors as 'mistakes'. It demands, explicitly or implicitly, the smoothing out of contradictions, rationalization, regularization of the spoken form irrespective of content. Even as a child, the writer is urged to hide his unsolved problems behind a protective screen of correctness.

Structurally, the printed book is a medium that operates as a monologue, isolating producer and reader. Feedback and interaction are extremely limited, demand elaborate procedures, and only in the rarest cases lead to corrections. Once an edition has been printed it cannot be corrected; at best it can be pulped. The control circuit in the case of literary criticism is extremely cumbersome and élitist. It excludes the public on principle.

None of the characteristics that distinguish written and printed literature apply to the electronic media. Microphone and camera abolish the class character of the mode of production (not of the production itself). The normative rules become unimportant. Oral interviews, arguments, demonstrations, neither demand nor allow orthography or 'good writing'. The television screen exposes the aesthetic smoothing-out of contradictions as camouflage. Admittedly, swarms of liars appear on it, but anyone can see from a long way off that they are peddling something. As at present constituted, radio, film, and television, are burdened to excess with authoritarian characteristics, the characteristics of the monologue, which they have inherited from older methods of production—and that is no accident. These outworn elements in today's media aesthetics are demanded by the social relations. They do not follow from the structure of the media. On the contrary, they go against it, for the structure demands interaction.

It is extremely improbable, however, that writing as a special technique will disappear in the foreseeable future. That goes for the book as well, the practical advantages of which for many purposes remain obvious. It is admittedly less handy and takes up more room than other storage systems, but up to now it offers simpler methods of access than, for example, the microfilm or the tape bank. It ought to be integrated into the system as a marginal case and thereby forfeit its aura of cult and ritual.

(This can be deduced from technological developments. Electronics are noticeably taking over writing: teleprinters, reading machines, high-speed transmissions, automatic photographic and electronic composition, automatic writing devices, typesetters, electrostatic processes, ampex libraries, cassette encyclopaedias, photocopyers and magnetic copiers, speedprinters.

The outstanding Russian media expert El Lissitsky incidentally demanded an 'electro-library' as far back as 1923—a request which, given the technical conditions of the time, must have seemed ridiculous or at least incomprehensible. This is how far this man's imagination reached into the future:

I draw the following analogy:

## Inventions in the field of verbal traffic

## Inventions in the field of general traffic

Articulated language . . . . .	Upright gait
Writing . . . . .	The wheel
Gutenberg's printing press . . . .	Carts drawn by animal power
? . . . . .	The automobile
? . . . . .	The aeroplane

I have produced this analogy to prove that so long as the book remains a palpable object, i.e. so long as it is not replaced by auto-vocalizing and kino-vocalizing representations, we must look to the field of the manufacture of books for basic innovations in the near future.

There are signs to hand suggesting that this basic innovation is likely to come from the neighbourhood of the collotype.'—op. cit. p. 40.

Today, writing has in many cases already become a secondary technique, a means of transcribing orally recorded speech; tape-recorded proceedings, attempts at speech-pattern recognition, and the conversion of speech into writing.)

18. The ineffectiveness of literary criticism when faced with so-called documentary literature is an indication of how far the critics' thinking has lagged behind the stage of the productive forces. It stems from the fact that the media have eliminated one of the most fundamental categories of aesthetics up to now—fiction. The fiction/non-fiction argument has been laid to rest just as was the 19th century's favourite dialectic of 'art' and 'life'. In his day, Benjamin demonstrated that the 'apparatus' (the concept of the medium was not yet available to him) abolishes authenticity. In the productions of the consciousness industry, the difference between the 'genuine' original and the reproduction disappears—'that aspect of reality which is not dependent on the apparatus has now become its most artificial aspect'. The process of reproduction reacts on the object reproduced and alters it fundamentally. The effects of this have not yet been adequately explained epistemologically. The categorical uncertainties to which it gives rise also affect the concept of the documentary. Strictly speaking, it has shrunk to its legal dimensions. A document is something the 'forging', i.e. the reproduction of which, is punishable by imprisonment. This definition naturally has no theoretical meaning. The reason is that a reproduction, to the extent that its technical quality is good enough, cannot be distinguished in any way from the original, irrespective of whether it is a painting, a passport or a bank note. The legal concept of the documentary record is only pragmatically useful; it serves only to protect economic interests.

The productions of the electronic media, by their nature, evade such distinctions as those between documentary and feature films. They are in every case explicitly determined by the given situation. The producer can never pretend, like the traditional novelist, 'to stand above things'. He is therefore partisan from the start. This fact finds formal expression in his techniques. Cutting, editing, dubbing—these are techniques for conscious manipulation without which the use of the new media is

inconceivable. It is precisely in these work processes that their productive power reveals itself—and here it is completely immaterial whether one is dealing with the production of a reportage or a play. The material, whether 'documentary' or 'fiction', is in each case only a prototype, a half-finished article, and the more closely one examines its origins, the more blurred the difference becomes. (Develop more precisely. The reality in which a camera turns up is always faked, e.g. the moon-landing.)

### The Desacralization of Art

19. The media also do away with the old category of works of art which can only be considered as separate objects, not as independent of their material infrastructure. The media do not produce such objects. They create programmes. Their production is in the nature of a process. That does not mean only (or not primarily) that there is no foreseeable end to the programme—a fact which, in view of what we are at present presented with, admittedly makes a certain hostility to the media understandable. It means, above all, that the media programme is open to its own consequences without structural limitations. (This is not an empirical description but a demand. A demand which admittedly is not made of the medium from without; it is a consequence of its nature, from which the much-vaunted open form can be derived—and not as a modification of it—from an old aesthetic.) The programmes of the consciousness industry must subsume into themselves their own results, the reactions and the corrections which they call forth, otherwise they are already out of date. They are therefore to be thought of not as means of consumption but as means of their own production.

20. It is characteristic of artistic avant-gardes that they have, so to speak, a presentiment of the potentiality of media which still lie in the future. It has always been one of the most important tasks of art to give rise to a demand, the time for the complete satisfaction of which has not yet come. The history of every art form has critical periods when that form strives towards effects which can only be easily achieved if the technical norm is changed, that is to say, in a new art form. The artistic extravagances and crudities which arise in this way, for instance in the so-called decadent period, really stem from art's richest historical source of power. Dadaism in the end teemed with such barbarisms. We can only now recognize the nature of its striving. Dadaism was attempting to achieve those effects which the public today seeks in film with the means of painting (or of literature)' (Benjamin, op. cit. p. 42). This is where the prognostic value of otherwise inessential productions such as happenings, flux and mixed media shows, is to be found. There are writers who in their work show an awareness of the fact that media, with the characteristics of the monologue, today have only a residual use-value. Many of them admittedly draw fairly short-sighted conclusions from this glimpse of the truth. For example, they offer the user the opportunity to arrange the material provided by arbitrary permutations. Every reader as it were should write his own book. When carried to extremes, such attempts to produce interaction, even when it goes against the structure of the medium employed, are nothing

more than invitations to freewheel. Mere noise permits of no articulated interactions. Short cuts, of the kind that Concept Art peddles, are based on the banal and false conclusion that the development of the productive forces renders all work superfluous. With the same justification, one could leave a computer to its own devices on the assumption that a random generator will organize material production by itself. Fortunately cybernetics experts are not given to such childish games.

21. For the old fashioned 'artist'—let us call him the author—it follows from these reflections that he must see it as his goal to make himself redundant as a specialist in much the same way as a teacher of literacy only fulfills his task when he is no longer necessary. Like every learning process, this process too is reciprocal. The specialist will learn as much or more from the non-specialists as the other way round. Only then can he contrive to make himself dispensable.

Meanwhile his social usefulness can best be measured by the degree to which he is capable of using the liberating factors in the media and bringing them to fruition. The tactical contradictions in which he must become involved in the process can neither be denied nor covered up in any way. But strategically his role is clear. The author has to work as the agent of the masses. He can lose himself in them only when they themselves become authors, the authors of history.

22. 'Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will' (Antonio Gramsci).

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## Letter from Ceylon

Tamara Deutscher

Addressing himself in 1923 to the students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow, Trotsky tried to make them aware of the dangers that Marxism ran in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. National movements for independence, argued Trotsky, constitute a highly progressive phenomenon in world history. At the same time, the struggle for national self-determination is a struggle for strictly limited national-bourgeois aims. 'Marxism preached the inevitability of capitalism, and those bourgeois-progressive elements which wanted capitalism for its own sake and not for the sake of socialism accepted Marxism, having previously *deprived it of its revolutionary sting*.' (My italics.) Further: 'Such is the case in all the countries . . . in which the national struggle for liberation from colonial slavery is going on. The young proletariat . . . [there] must rely on this progressive movement for support. But it is clear as daylight, that the young Marxists of the East run the risk of . . . becoming permeated with nationalist ideology.'

### Ceylonese Particularities

Separated from India by only a 20 mile stretch of water, Ceylon has none of those pressing and depressing problems which bedevil Indian life and politics. By comparison with India there is no starvation, no malnutrition; no maharajas, no untouchables to speak of; no fearsome religious taboos; little military expenditure and no neighbours with whom to dispute frontiers. The 'Pearl of the East,' or if one prefers the nickname given to it by the nation of shopkeepers 'The Clapham Junction' of East and West, is an extremely fertile island, half the size of England, blessed with a variety of climates and scenery and vegetation. While the low lying maritime provinces swelter in tropical heat, in the central highlands the temperature may be as low as 70 degrees; and in January and February the highest peaks—6,000 to 7,000 feet—may be decked with white frosty mist. Although by West European standards there is no lack of dismal poverty, the free measure of rice provided by the State, the abundance of banana and coco-nut palms, the shoals of fish in the quiet bays, help to keep body and soul together.



Expectation of life at birth has jumped from some 30 years in the 1920's to over 62 years in the 1960's. There is a free health service and the village streets are dotted with a multitude of People's Dispensaries which, in conjunction with the *Ayurveda* clinics practising traditional Eastern medicine, more or less provide the population with some amount of medical care. The astonishingly high expectation of life for a South-East Asian country is matched in Ceylon by a high degree of literacy: at least 85 per cent of the population can read and write. There is obligatory schooling up to the age of 14, and although it can hardly be enforced—especially in the countryside, where the youngest member of the family is often entrusted with minding the village herd of buffaloes—no traveller can miss the first day of a new term: on all roads impeccably dressed and cleanly scrubbed children make their way to school. All grades of education are free, from the primary school to the University. Studies abroad, particularly of medicine and science, are also subsidized or paid by the State.

Ethnically, Ceylon—with 11,000,000 inhabitants—is like a melting pot where the races never quite 'melted'. The Statistical Yearbook lists Lowcountry Sinhalese and Kandyan Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils, Ceylon Moors and Indian Moors, Burghers<sup>1</sup> and Eurasians, Malays, and others. To try and disentangle the primary causes of the survival of 'race consciousness' would lead us too far back: the fact is that racial tensions, mainly between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, still persist dangerously near the political surface. The savage anti-Tamil pogroms of 1958 should not be forgotten. The accounts of eye-witnesses may seem hardly credible to the casual visitor today, struck by the extraordinary serenity, calmness, and apparent composure of Ceylonese crowds on festive as well as on political occasions. But this impression may be misleading. There is no certainty that 1958 will not repeat itself, unless and until the heightened race-consciousness is replaced by the developed class-consciousness of the proletariat.

Racial distinctions are much more in evidence than caste divisions, which have never been as rigid as those in India. The curious circumstance that in Ceylon the highest caste, the farmers, were also the most numerous and that therefore the social pyramid was, in a sense, upside down, may have made it more vulnerable to winds of change. Caste barriers, which in the subsistence economy were rooted in men's occupations naturally began to give way under the onset of capitalism. It is specifically with the ills of capitalism that modern Ceylon has now to contend.

### The Victory of the United Front

When in May 1970 the ruling United National Party suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Mrs Bandaranaike's United Front, there was such an outburst of popular jubilation all over the country that it became rather puzzling to discover where all its former supporters had gone. After all, it was the UNP, the representative of the pro-Western

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<sup>1</sup> A small group of mixed European and Ceylonese origin.

comprador bourgeoisie, that had led Ceylon to its formal independence in 1948; it was the UNP which, with short breaks, ruled the country for nearly 14 years thereafter; it was the UNP which, with a truly British talent for withdrawing a little in order not to risk losing too much, acquiesced in the introduction of many of the welfare measures which made Ceylon such an exception in South-East Asia. Yet after the elections it was very difficult to find more than a handful who would admit that they had ever voted for the Good Old Party. There is no doubt that the results of the elections reflected a powerful swing to the left by the Ceylonese masses.

The UNP government in Colombo was replaced by a rather unusual alliance—or *misalliance*—of Mrs Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (which won 90 of the 151 seats in the House of Representatives) with two parties professing a Marxist allegiance: the so-called 'Trotskyist' Lanka Sama Samaja Party (19 seats) and the pro-Moscow Communist Party (6 seats). The pro-Peking Communist Party, though vocal, was numerically too small to enter into the contest of parliamentary elections. The official Trotskyists, affiliated to the Fourth International, remain a small but active extra-parliamentary opposition.

Of all these left formations, the LSSP has always had the greatest influence on Ceylonese politics. Unbelievable as it may seem to the present generation in English Universities, most of the leaders of the LSSP first became 'infected' with Marxist ideas during their student days in England. It was they, way back in the mid-1930's, who brought the blast of scientific socialism, Leninism, and Trotskyism, into a half-awakened colonial backwater. There they became the envy and the pride of the numerous Trotskyist groupings scattered all over Europe: for they formed a Trotskyist party with a mass following. Moreover, theirs was the only communist party in the world which managed, by a sizeable majority, to expel the Stalinists from its ranks instead of being expelled by them. In 1938 the Trotskyists formally proclaimed their adherence to the Fourth International, changed the constitution of their party and converted it 'from a loose body of individuals into a fighting organization.'<sup>2</sup> This 'fighting organization' refused to support the war and in 1940 was driven underground. Some members were arrested, some escaped to India, others caused a sensation by breaking out of prison and fleeing the country together with their prison guard. The party, though proscribed, continued to organize and lead plantation and urban workers in a wave of strikes. When the war was over, the LSSP emerged stronger than ever and with its authority and popularity greatly enhanced. It became *the* party of the Sinhalese workers.

With the granting of Dominion Status came—paradoxically—an ebb in the workers' movement. The bourgeoisie, taking a leaf from the book of the Left, or perhaps in fear of it, became politically more active. The economic boom, especially during the Korean War, when rubber prices shot up, rendered concessions to the masses less costly and painful to it. But by 1952-53 the cost of living was increasing again. A new period of

<sup>2</sup> Lealie Goonewardene, *A Short History of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party*, Colombo 1960.

agitation and unrest reached its culmination in the 'Great Hartal'—a one day general strike combined with passive resistance. This turned out to be a cruel confrontation between the masses and their rulers: the police and army were ordered to shoot. The workers all over the country certainly showed their power, militancy, and solidarity; and a few paid with their lives for this outburst of revolutionary fervour.

A very faint echo of that fervour could be detected in the commemoration of the event 17 years later. But on August 12th 1970 there was a disturbing unanimity in the assessment of the Great Hartal. The extreme right-wing press recalled that 'the people rose that day to a man because they had been hoodwinked and cheated by the government . . .' Colvin R. de Silva, one of the founding fathers of the LSSP and a brilliant orator, saw in 'the election of the Coalition Government . . . only the continuation of what the people in the Hartal fought for'. The government will not betray the people, it will keep its promises, he assured a large and attentive audience. From the Communist member of the government came a warning: 'Youth in its innocence may let itself be carried away from the government by capitalist and imperialist forces . . .'. In fact, the 'innocent youth' of Ceylon was at that particular time showing many signs of restless radicalism.

The period from the Great Hartal in 1953 till 1964 was for the Trotskyists a time of commotion, confusion, and internecine strife. The year 1964 became a turning point in its fortunes: the majority of the party decided to join forces with Mrs Bandaranaike's SLFP and enter the government. For this 'alliance with the bourgeoisie and betrayal of the principle of class struggle', the Lanka Sama Samaja Party was excluded from the Fourth International. What followed was much heart-searching among the leaders and among the rank and file, further splits and divisions, and a considerable exodus from the party. The governmental coalition was, however, short-lived. Many came back to the aid of the party when it found itself, once again, in opposition.

### A New Foreign Policy

It would be wrong to regard the 1964 experiment as a dress rehearsal for 1970. Today the United Front seems to be strongly in the saddle with Mrs Bandaranaike firmly in control. Has its left wing moved a little more to the right? Or has the right perhaps moved just a fraction to the left? Or have all three governmental parties concluded that they came to power on a new wave of Sinhalese chauvinism and Buddhist revivalism and that only as long as they let themselves be carried by this wave, can they hope to introduce some watered-down social reforms in the country? It was a 'Left' oriented government which won in a competition in nationalism; the reactionary United National Party was accused of persisting in its English ways and of 'selling out Buddhism' in favour of foreign religions. Now Ceylon is moving out of the Western camp. But is it in anyway entering upon a road to socialism?

The United Front can boast of rapid changes in its foreign policy: recognition of the North Vietnamese government in Hanoi and de-

mand of an immediate withdrawal of American troops from Indochina; recognition of North Korea as well as the German Democratic Republic; suspension of relations between Ceylon and Israel. To the slight embarrassment of the Communist Minister, Peking has congratulated Colombo on its 'neutralist' stand. However, Maoist China has long had friendly relations with Ceylon: one third of the rice which Ceylon badly needs comes from China at a price lower than world market levels; rubber, which slumped heavily after the Korean war, is exported to China on terms profitable to Ceylon. These commercial exchanges, which started in 1952, have been pursued regardless of the political complexion of the government in Colombo.

Relations with the USA have been more chequered. Although Ceylon was firmly on the side of the West during the Cold War, a relatively small essay in 'socialization' during the interlude of 1964 was viewed with grave anxiety in Washington. As a reprisal for taking over the installations of American and British oil companies, Ceylon was deprived of US aid. Two years later, when the nationalized foreign oil companies had been given twice the compensation to which they were legally entitled, aid was resumed. Not much of it will probably now be forthcoming, since the Peace Corps and other US agencies have been politely but unequivocally asked to leave the island.

### Sinhalese Chauvinism

This *revirement* in foreign policy has not yet been matched by any similar display of energy in domestic affairs. One measure is, however, to be implemented forthwith: Sinhalese becomes the only official language of the country. This is not an expression of animosity against the former colonial power. To some extent, it is directed against the comprador Establishment, for whom English is the world language of big business. It incidentally hits the intelligentsia and the educated élite, for whom English is the main language of modern science and culture. First and foremost, however, 'Sinhala only' is a blow against the Tamils and smacks therefore not only of nationalism but of a chauvinist racism.

The 'Sinhala Only' policy has since 1955 been the slogan of the SLFP. Are its partners on the left today to embrace it? *The Short History of the Sama Samaja Party*, published on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 1960, gives one answer to this question: 'The LSSP was the only party with a base among the Sinhalese that stood firmly right to the end by its policy of both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages. Even the Communist Party latterly changed its position on this question.' We are then, however, told that in politics, as in business, 'the price' determines all: 'But there is no gainsaying that the party has paid a heavy price for its stand. It lost heavily among the Sinhalese masses. And although it has won the sympathy of wide sections of the minorities this has far from compensated for the losses.'

Leaving aside for a moment the question of minorities, the abandonment of English and the insistence on Sinhalese as the only medium of instruction, especially in academic institutions, will undoubtedly impoverish the country intellectually. For better or worse and for historic

reasons which it would take us too long to discuss here, the Ceylonese intelligentsia is English-language educated. There is now, and has been for ages past, a tremendous respect among all classes for education and knowledge. There is no Anglo-Saxon contempt for intellectuals and in the social hierarchy an artist, a writer, a doctor, or a teacher have traditionally occupied a higher place than a successful businessman.

There thus exists a mass demand for higher education. The University of Ceylon was set up in 1961 in the most beautiful area of the island, amid the cool and enchanting hills of Kandy, the last capital of the Sinhalese Kingdom. Its campus stretches for over four miles. The luxuriant vegetation is tended with the utmost care and devotion—a Garden of Eden that must be a great drain on Ceylon's economic resources, but also a source of satisfaction and pride. The library shows unmistakably how Janus-faced is the Ceylonese intelligentsia: it looks to the East and to the West with equal curiosity and shows hardly any trace of parochialism. To Peradeniya, which seems huge against the background of a small and poor country, flock tens of thousands of school leavers annually. In 1970 40,000 sat for their entrance examinations, 10,000 became eligible, but only 5,000 could be admitted. Over 60 per cent of students come from rural areas; for the rest, most belong to the urban lower-middle classes and some are children of professional people. Will this new generation, brought up on 'Sinhala Only', preserve the international outlook characteristic of its elders, even if, as the government promises, 'proper facilities for teaching English will be provided'? (I was assured that there would be no need to translate Trotsky's works into Sinhalese...)

For a sizable proportion of the people in Ceylon preoccupation with world culture and literature must certainly seem an irrelevant luxury. The 'Sinhala Only' policy is primarily an anti-Tamil measure. To understand this one has to glance back at what seems now ancient history. The British Empire at the height of its power elbowed the Dutch (who had replaced the Portuguese) out from the Maritime Provinces in 1796. In 1815 they finally managed to drive the Kandyan king from his rocky redoubt. The low-country Sinhalese, the Kandyan Sinhalese, as well as the Tamils from far north, thereupon came under British rule. The opening up of the country, the intensive road-building which made the introduction of plantation industry possible, demanded an amenable labour force which could not be recruited from among the indigenous farmers, hunters, or fishermen. The cheapest labour was available in an adjacent part of the Empire—in South India and from there it was imported *en masse*. These 'Indian' Tamils constitute to this day the preponderant majority of plantation workers 500,000 out of 2,000,000 Tamils (the population of Ceylon is 11,000,000). One of the first official Acts of independent Ceylon in 1948–49 denied these 'Indian' workers Ceylonese citizenship and disfranchised them. One of the last achievements of the 1964 coalition was the so-called Sirima-Shastri Pact, by which the Indian government agreed to 'accept' more than half a million 'persons of Indian origin' over a period of 15 years. The pill of forcible deportation was suitably coated with financial 'incentives' which are supposed to help the expellee to settle in India.

## The Role of Buddhism

The Citizenship Act of 1948 was passed under the twin pressure of reawakened Sinhalese Chauvinism and Buddhist revivalism. The argument so often dictated by false consciousness among the masses that 'they'—foreigners, immigrants—are undercutting wages, was not heard; for at that time, right after independence, Ceylon's economic situation was probably better than it has ever been since. Agitation for the establishment of Buddhism as the state religion received an additional impulse in 1956, during the celebrations of Buddha Jayanti—the 2,500th anniversary of Buddha's death. 1965 marked a further triumph for the Buddhist clergy: the replacement of the century-old Sunday holiday by Poya day which falls on each of the four phases of the moon. This complicates everyday life in many respects, not least in accountancy, because weeks become irregular, some consisting of seven and some of eight working days. With the Hindu and Moslem observance of Friday, the Christian of Sunday and a day off for all on Poya day and half a day off on pre-Poya, in business and in leisure there is not a little confusion.

Most of the Buddhist hierarchy now seem more reconciled to the alliance between Mrs Bandaranaike and the Left Wing parties than in 1964. Its previous suspicion of all 'Marxists' was probably allayed by the Joint Election Manifesto, which recalled the brutal police action against demonstrating monks during the UNP rule and took it upon itself to repeat the usual pledge about the rightful place ensured for the religion of 'the majority of the people'. (A recent press photograph of prominent members of the RSS in the traditional attitude of reverence in a Buddhist temple is an indication of the current trend.)

The Sirima-Shastri Pact did not save the 1964 coalition from collapsing; a similar coalition now solemnly promises to 'implement it fully both in letter and spirit'. This shameful legislation has been put at the door of the Minister of Plantations and Constitutional Affairs, Dr Colvin R. de Silva. How did he and his colleagues view the future of the 'Indian' Tamil plantation workers when the party celebrated its 25th birthday? 'The party's position on the question of citizenship . . . has also cost the party a price . . . However, the party has never ceased its opposition to the unjust citizenship laws, and has adhered to its position that those who are permanent residents and desire to make Ceylon their home should be granted citizenship.' Today it is not enough for an 'Indian' Tamil to 'desire to make Ceylon his home'; he has to produce proofs of 'permanent residence' of his parents and even grandparents in that 'home'. Most of the plantation workers still live in the old British-built 'coolie lines', which are not fit for human habitation. In a whole 'line' there is probably not one room containing a single piece of furniture in which any marriage or residence certificates—let alone of parents and grandparents—have any chance of being preserved. So only a very, very small number of 'Indian' Tamils have a chance of acquiring Ceylonese citizenship. So far a much smaller number even than this have declared their willingness to be 'repatriated' to India.

Where else can they go? As 'stateless' persons they do not even

qualify for resettlement on the uninhabited 'crown lands' of the Eastern Maritime Provinces. Travelling to the East coast from the ruins of the once resplendent Polonnaruwa which to this day preserves the architectural traces of the links between the cultures of India and Ceylon, one is struck by the increasing emptiness and desolation. In ancient times Polonnaruwa and its environs flourished by means of an elaborate system of irrigation and a whole series of artificial lakes, still in existence. Further East, towards the busy junction of Valaichenai with its central market and state-owned paper mills, there are now only traces of human activity here and there. Some kind of slash-and-burn cultivation goes on semi-legally; on a small area of an acre or less, trees are felled and the dry undergrowth is burned. The soil is only very superficially tilled and a one-year crop of vegetables or millet is grown. The labourer and his family live in a hastily constructed hut from which, after having gathered a miserable harvest, they move further to exploit another similar plot of land, allowing the old one to be swallowed up again by the creeping jungle. This wasteful *chena* cultivation is the resort of those with no capital, or those who are excluded from the government colonization policy, under which 'crown land' is sold cheaply and remains the property of the buyer on condition that within five years or so planned and approved cultivation is established and permanent buildings raised. Perhaps some land here could be reserved by the Minister of Plantation Industries for 'stateless' Tamils . . . .

At first sight it might seem odd that the business of both Plantations and of Constitutional Affairs should be concentrated in the hands of one Minister, even as versatile as Dr Colvin R. de Silva. It will be his job to assure that the present parliament drafts and adopts a new constitution which will end Ceylon's dominion status and proclaim it a 'free and sovereign Republic'. He may also succeed, against stronger opposition, in pushing through legislation abolishing the Senate. Are these progressive constitutional measures to be seen as an *amende honorable* for dealing with the 'Indian' Tamils?

It would be ridiculous to derive any satisfaction from the fact that the words 'socialism' and 'Marxism' do not provoke horror even among the most reactionary circles in Ceylon. It is consoling that there is one country in the world, albeit small, where a political party actually gains in popularity by calling itself Trotskyist; it is sad that in the same country the word 'Powellism' does not evoke any horror either.

### The Economic Prospect

There is no doubt that the present government now faces problems which defy solution within the existing social system. There is, first of all, a continuous increase in the cost of living. As everywhere else in the capitalist world in the race between prices and wages, wages inevitably lag behind. The official number of unemployed is over 500,000 (among the most vocal are over 10,000 arts graduates, frustrated by lack of any work perspective). The underemployed and those performing innumerable and inessential services are not, of course, registered. Nor are the masses of petty shopkeepers whose stalls—

quaintly called 'boutiques'—line not only every main village street, but even whole districts of Colombo, where old English cars jostle with bullock carts, bicycles, and lorries (mostly Japanese). The 'boutiques' are open long hours, because the cost of labour of a wife, daughter or mother-in-law counts for nothing in the balance sheet of the business. In the evenings the stalls are lit up by kerosene lamps—electricity, though available, is too expensive to be used. A quivering flame falls on stacks of household goods: all kinds of brooms, mats, baskets, bags, sacks, coils of rope, made of palm leaves; water jugs and jars, aluminium urns and clay bowls, kettles, pots and pans. Then there are booths where a dozen pineapples, a cluster of bananas, a heap of yellow coconuts and a few sacks of onions, beans, or lentils, testify to the scarcity of capital invested in the enterprise. It will take a very long time before all those who eke a miserable existence out of selling and buying and taking in each other's washing will be absorbed into any productive industrial system.

The prices of Ceylon's traditional exports, especially of tea, have been declining. Thus even a 25 per cent increase in production within the last 10 years has not brought any financial reward. In any case, the price of Ceylon tea is determined thousands of miles away, in London's Mincing Lane, which has a near-monopoly and re-sells, with profit, to all foreign markets. To break this monopoly by concentrating all foreign trade in the hands of the state, and to open new markets for tea, are the immediate preoccupations of the new government. Why do Russian workers not drink a good Ceylonese brew? Why should Apartheid prevent us from selling our tea to South Africa? In the meantime there is widespread restlessness. Will the second free measure of rice be restored (a measure equals 2lbs)? Will more jobs be available? Will the tax on irrigation water be lowered? Will wages catch up with prices?

It is simple enough to proclaim Ceylon a Republic. It was easier for Mrs Bandaranaike to share her anxieties in Lusaka with 18 other 'non-aligned' nations which face similar difficulties, than for her Minister of Finance Dr N. M. Perera (LSSP) to face the International Monetary Fund in Copenhagen. How is aid to be procured without its throttling strings? How is a loan to be found without granting the IMF the ultimate power to decide who should be employed in building the great Mahaweli Diversion Scheme or where, and for how much, the machinery for the scheme should be bought; without allowing the Fund to dictate whether the rice subsidies should, or should not, be continued; whether the cost of education should or should not be curtailed; whether school children should or should not get their school meal free of charge?

### Opposition—Right and Left

What chances has the United Front government of staying in office for its full term of 5 years? How real is its outward show of confidence? During the first three months after the elections, the outgoing UNP and its right wing adherents, stunned by defeat, weakened by internal re-criminations, seemed in disarray, unable to offer any resistance, let



alone go over to attack. The Lake House publishing combine which had exercised a virtual monopoly of the Press, meekly changed its tone, re-shuffled its editorial staff, and even paraded a little pink camouflage. Some of its directors, against whom charges of illegal foreign exchange transactions were made in parliament, are probably busy muffling the rattle of skeletons in their cupboards. The 'City' in Colombo is apprehensive, expectant, but inactive; even the threat of the nationalization of the banks caused more panic in London than in Ceylon, perhaps because from a distance it looked more real than it actually was.

To what extent and for how long the opposition will remain passive is, of course, difficult to predict. It should be remembered that in 1962 there was an attempt at a *coup d'état*, engineered by high ranking army and police officers. The attempt proved abortive, but the fact that those found guilty by the Supreme Court were soon rewarded by big jobs and large salaries when their sentences were quashed in appeal to the Privy Council in 1965, showed that they had allies in the highest quarters. They and their protectors in Ceylon certainly have powerful supporters in the world outside: the Indonesian experience may no doubt serve *pour encourager les autres*.

For the time being the radical opposition, though diffuse, is certainly more vocal and the government in its anxiety not to be outflanked on the left deals with it rather clumsily. The first loud shot against a youth movement (quite wrongly labelled 'Che Guevarist') was fired by Dr N. M. Perera, the LSSP Minister of Finance. This old 'Trotskyist' veteran of the anti-imperialist struggle, pulled out his heaviest gun against them: he accused the 'Guevarists' of being 'in the pay of a foreign power', this time not proverbial Russian gold, but the CIA. The movement in question came to the surface just before the elections. Very little had been heard about it until the newspapers publicised it with sensationalist coverage. It is said to have been started by a former student of the Lumumba University, the son of a member of the pro-Moscow Communist Party. Its most articulate leader is a Sinhalese, Rohan Wijeweera, an ex-student of law, and an able speaker and organizer. Judged by the standards of any radical student language in the West, Wijeweera sounds moderate indeed. At a recent gathering in Colombo's Hyde Park, he told his audience that they were not Guevarists but form a Popular Liberation Front (Janata Vimukthi Peramuna). They had been active since 1965; and had enough funds to publish leaflets and distribute literature because their members, though poor, were ready to make great sacrifices; they maintained contacts with ordinary workers, agricultural labourers all over the country, on the plantations as well as in factories; they were setting up study classes and educating people in socialism. 'If we are CIA agents', he went on 'so are the members of the government whom we supported in the elections. We went to the country . . . to teach people socialism . . . and we shall support the government if they progress towards socialism.'

What could be less subversive than such a pledge? It may sound feeble and insignificant to the ten thousand ex-students who are unemployed; it may not seem militant to all those who have already 'learned socialism'. Nevertheless, it will certainly evoke echoes at the

University in Peradeniya among students who, the day after the elections, daubed a thick layer of red paint on the green signboards and signposts all over their campus. The Popular Liberation Front has gained a sneaking admiration among the members of the LSSP, who perhaps expected from their party more than it had ever promised to do. A few days after the Hyde Park meeting, a huge rally took place at Ratnapura, in the centre of the rubber growing district. There the crowd marched with banners extolling Ho Chi Minh, Trotsky, Mao, Castro, calling on the government to 'Go left and forward' and 'on the road of Marx and Engels'. The speakers, some of them prominent in the LSSP, demanded that the government should take over all foreign assets and nationalize plantations, that it should not only 'nationalize Lake House but level it to the ground' or 'make it publish school books'. The M.P. for Runawella was heard to exclaim: 'If socialism is to be built and preserved, capitalism must be destroyed'. True and simple. But the United Front government has only promised to 're-pattern' (?) the plantations and establish State agencies 'to guide and direct' them. The LSSP and the CP propose to set up Employees Councils in public enterprises, with a consultative voice only.

The Popular Liberation Front will doubtless extend its influence when the masses demand more than a 'consultative voice', and it becomes clearer that piecemeal reforms lead nowhere; when the government reaches a point at which it is unable to 'go left and forward' at the same time. How the Front will develop and what character it will acquire, is still far from certain: one might wonder how much socialist education there is in these 'teachers of socialism'. Some of their sympathizers hint, with regret, that the Front is not free from racial prejudice either. Yet the attitude towards the question of race remains the litmus paper which shows the true political outlook of any group in Ceylon. The only organization completely free from any racism is Bala Tampoe's Revolutionary LSSP, which belongs to the Fourth International. Tampoe himself is a Tamil. It is a small organization, but its control of the white collar workers of the Mercantile Union potentially enables it to paralyze business activity or, in the phrase dear to bourgeois statesmen in the UK, 'to hold the nation's economy to ransom'. Its limitation is a tendency to repeat old slogans instead of analysing new situations. It is to be hoped that the most dedicated and principled members of other organizations, will shed their 'nationalist ideology' and give back to Marxism that 'revolutionary sting' which in Ceylon has become lost 'during the struggle for liberation from colonial slavery.'

October 1970

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**Longman**

# interview with

## Cathal Goulding Chief of Staff of the IRA

### *introduction*

*For much of its existence the Irish Republican Army has lacked the sympathy or indeed the attention of socialists. In the period of the national liberation struggle in Ireland in the early 'twenties those who had managed to weld the military lessons of guerrilla struggle against the British with a revolutionary strategy perished in the prisons of the Irish Free State. With the death of Connolly in 1916 organized labour had retreated to economist manoeuvres. The tradition of Irish republicanism was upheld by a body of men zealous to regain the lost six counties, but careless of what kind of society a reunited Ireland should be.*

*With such limited perspectives the IRA was no match for De Valera. In 1926, convinced of the futility of other than parliamentary means of struggle De Valera formed the Fianna Fail party which still holds power. He took many of his former comrades in the IRA with him, and with the adroit employment of the rump IRA he assumed power in 1932. The strategy of Fianna Fail over the following twenty to thirty years was the development of a protected manufacturing and agricultural capitalism in the twenty-six counties of the South, wedded to a tea-room vision of an Ireland of colleens, peat fires and minstrelsy, well salted with priestcraft, and economically in fief to English imperialism.*

*The IRA managed to contain an attempt in the early 'thirties to develop the movement in a socialist direction. No revolutionary strategy was developed to match the military ardour and American money that were now its only assets. In the late 'thirties, under the leadership of Sean Russell it inaugurated a bombing campaign conducted in England. The campaign was a disaster, as were the contacts with Germany in the opening phase of the war.*

*Even so the penalties of military adventurism remained unrecognized. A military campaign was launched in the North in 1956 by a dissident group and in 1957 the official IRA joined it. The end of the 'fifties saw most of the IRA interned, morale low, no money and the final apprehension that purely military operations were doomed to failure. In the phrase of the present chief of staff of the IRA 'we moved through our people like a fish through a desert'.*

*The present chief of staff of the IRA is Cathal Goulding. His own career exhibits the dedication that has—whatever its politics—always been a feature of the IRA. By trade he is a housepainter, and 15 of his 49 years have been spent in*

*either Irish or English goals. After his accession to the leadership of the IRA the republican movement began to develop in a new direction. It is for this reason that NLR presents the following interview with him. Goulding is lucid and uncompromising on the failures of the Republican movement. He also speaks of the need for revolution and socialism.*

*Of course not everyone in the republican movement accepted the new idiom. It was not without much debate and dissension that the new policies in the middle 'sixties were developed. In an earlier issue of NLR Peter Gibbon reported on the last annual conference of Sinn Féinn, the political arm of the IRA, where dissension finally developed into open schism.*

*The 'Provisional Executive' of the IRA was formed by the dissidents, declaring themselves to be the true heirs of Republicanism. They accused the 'official' IRA of having abandoned armed struggle in favour of alien political creeds. In this interview Cathal Goulding replies to such charges.*

*It seems unlikely that the political development of the IRA will be arrested now after the rapid evolution of the 'sixties. Already there are those within the Republican movement who are calling for more political clarity on the question of class alliances in the North, on the development of indigenous capitalism in the South and on the necessity of smashing the bourgeois state machine on both sides of the border. The statement of IRA perspectives outlined by Goulding must therefore be seen as a document of the Republican movement's continuing attempt to rediscover and redevelop the revolutionary socialism of James Connolly and carry to a successful conclusion the task which he began.* A.C.

## The New Strategy of the IRA

*After your Northern campaign of 1956-62, the Republican Movement adopted a new course. Could you give a brief account of this new course and why it was adopted?*

When the campaign in the Six Counties ended in 1962, the leadership of the movement was faced with the question: what form will our next campaign take? We had to ask this question of ourselves, because we knew that if we were to retain the leadership of the movement, and maintain the movement itself as a revolutionary organization, we would need to have a policy for the next phase of the fight against British Imperialism in Ireland.

Also, we had on our hands trained physical force revolutionaries who were, to some extent, still armed. They would decide for themselves what would happen next, if we didn't decide for them. With that idea in mind, we called a conference. It lasted roughly eighteen months—almost two years. We held its sessions regularly, almost once a fortnight. At these meetings we called representatives of local leadership.

We included in this Conference a number of the younger people who were active militarily—in the 25 year age-group or even younger. It was essential to stop any premature action by these people. We weren't just sitting down and waiting for something to happen. We were determined to *plan* for something that we could develop.

*Was this really a post-mortem on the Northern Campaign failure?*

Yes, but it was also a post-mortem in a larger sense. The terms of reference that the Army Council gave this Conference, were, briefly, to examine the whole position of the Republican movement from the beginning of this century, to try to supply answers to a number of different questions—such as why was the Republican movement unable to succeed in spite of the fact that the people who were engaged in its revolutionary activities were willing to make any sacrifice for it. Although supporters made sacrifices in the sense that they gave us their property, their money, we still never came within a real hope of success.

We found that we couldn't stay within the historical terms of reference we'd been given. We had to go back further. The whole history of the resistance to British Imperialism in Ireland, even from 1798, was relevant. The conclusions that we came to were that, although we had the potential for revolution (we had the manpower, and in some cases we even had the material), we were separated from the people of Ireland, in the sense that we were a secret organization.

The people had no real knowledge of our objectives, they didn't understand our tactics or our motives. If they didn't understand us, they couldn't be with us. Without the support of the majority of the people, we just couldn't succeed.

The question was: how could we get the people to support us? The evidence was that the Republican movement had no real policies. Without objectives, we couldn't develop a proper strategy. Tactics were all that we had employed. The actual fight for freedom had become an end in itself to us. Instead of a means, it became an end. We hadn't planned to achieve the freedom of Ireland. We simply planned *to fight* for the freedom of Ireland. We could never hope to succeed because we never planned to succeed.

*What did you conclude?*

The answer was plain: we would have to establish our objectives; to explain these to our own movement; to persuade our movement to accept them; to bring them to the people and explain them—and then to show the people, by our initial political and agitational activities, that we were sincere. We would have to declare what *kind* of Government, what *kind* of State we wanted in Ireland. We would then have to show the people by propaganda, education and action, why this type of system would be beneficial to them—that it would mean more bread and butter, better wages, better housing conditions, more education and a profounder cultural life for everyone.

*How did you propose to bring these things about?*

Our first objective then was to involve ourselves in the everyday problems of people; to organize them to demand better houses, better working conditions, better jobs, better pay, better education—to develop agitational activities along these lines. By doing this we felt that we could involve the people, not so much in supporting the Republican movement for *our political* ends, but in supporting agitation so that they themselves would be part of a revolutionary force demanding what the present system just couldn't produce.

So, we believed that political power must be our objective, whether we got it through physical force or through the ballot box or by agitation. The means are immaterial. Of course, we believed, as a revolutionary organization, that the people can't get real political power by simply having representatives elected. There were too many examples in the world—Greece, Spain, Portugal, where the people elected the Government in a democratic manner and were 'democratically' oppressed by the forces of the Establishment who 'democratically' control the police, the Army and the Church.

*In that sense, then, the policy adopted in 1962-63 was explicitly a socialist revolutionary policy?*

It was. In fact, these discussions went on almost into 1965, and in 1965, we produced a nine-point document dealing with social agitation, the means by which we could finance the movement, what our attitudes would be to the courts and a change in our policies towards the institutions of the Establishment.

We felt that by sitting down and doing nothing about the Special Powers Act in the North, by doing nothing about the Offences against the State Act in the South, by continuing to refuse to recognize the courts, by refusing to answer police questions, by refusing to account for our movements, we left ourselves on a clean plate for the police forces of the Establishment to take us and put us in gaol whenever it suited them. A man in gaol was simply a casualty.

*Logically this new policy would involve abandonment of your tradition of parliamentary abstention?*

The last of these nine points was related to parliamentary participation. This last point was accepted by the 1963-65 Conference by a small majority—I think it was by about two votes—and these recommendations were passed on to the Army Council and the Sinn Féin Executive. The Army Council called a Special Convention of the IRA and recommended acceptance of the first eight points and that the ninth point be rejected.

*Your policy, then, is still one of abstention from parliamentary participation North and South?*

Yes, but at a later stage we felt that if we could develop our campaign

in three phases: economic resistance, political action and military action, by the time the economic phase would be finished and we would be in what we termed 'the political demonstration' action phase. The people would have been educated by activity and demonstration more than by propaganda or lectures, for we felt that we would never be able to develop political awareness by simply talking about parliamentary participation.

*How, then, could you hope to achieve anything by political participation?*

In our plan, a public representative should be a man who would have an assignment: to help our 'outside' political, economic and military activity in destroying the Establishment, North and South. He would have a revolutionary objective within each Parliament. If we got a number of people elected we could, at different stages, refuse to attend Parliament on a critical issue in which the Government would have a bare majority, or in other cases where our one or two or three deputies would swing the vote against them, we could send our men to speak on the issue, to vote and to beat them on it. *We would be extending our guerrilla activities and tactics into the very Parliament itself.* This, we felt, would be the most effective way in which we could operate.

*What would you hope to do?*

It was essential that we should be elected by people for revolutionary reasons—that it would be a revolutionary programme that we would be elected on. We didn't really want people to be elected as Sinn Fein candidates merely as such. If our people were elected from an area *where agitation had developed to such an extent that the majority (or a large number) of people in the area were disgusted and disillusioned with the establishment,* we could put up a candidate, representing that agitation. That is a revolutionary use of political action. Now, to carry forward the story, by 1967 the Movement had become dormant. It wasn't active in any political sense or even in any revolutionary sense. Membership was falling off. People had gone away. Units of the IRA and the Cumann of Sinn Fein had become almost non-existent. We felt that something dynamic was needed or the Movement was going to break up and splinter into pieces.

We called a meeting of the Republican Army's local leadership at the end of August 1967. We compiled reports from all the different sections of the Movement—and the departments of the Army. These reports related to the strength of the Movement: the physical strength, the financial strength, its strength in arms, its political strength. We had reports on the other sections of the Movement: Sinn Fein, the Fianna, the Cumann na mBan, the Cumann Cabhrach, and other sub-committees, to show the backbone of the Republican Movement, exactly what the position was.

Every local O/C had to report on the state of organisation in his area and its prospects as he saw it. At that Conference of 1967, we started on a Friday night and finished on Sunday evening. This gave a fairly complete picture—not so much to the leadership (we had a fairly



good idea) but to the local leadership, not so much of his own area and HQ but of the state of other areas—of the whole Movement. They suddenly realized that they had no Movement at all. They only thought they had a Movement. We were able to make the point out to them that the circulation of 'United Irishman', for example, which in 1957-58 and '59 had been in the hundred thousand bracket, by 1967 had fallen to fourteen thousand.

In a lot of cases, these papers weren't being paid for by the local organization—the money was being used for other purposes—to finance their own local activities. As a result, the 'United Irishman' was in debt to the tune of three or four thousand pounds.

Out of this Conference came recommendations. The first was that we should openly declare for a Socialist Republic. That was now the objective of the Republican Movement: to establish a Socialist Republic 'as envisaged by Connolly and in keeping with the sentiments of the Proclamation of 1916.' We felt that with this resolution passed, we had got away from the claptrap and the clichés that we had allowed ourselves to be caught in over the years—like the old line that when we had got the British Army out of Ireland, the people of Ireland could make up their own minds, and simply take what was rightly theirs.

We pointed out that our people had decided that they would simply fight to drive out the British Imperial forces in 1921 but that Imperialism in economics, finance and everything else had remained behind. The people remained as much the slaves of British Imperialism as they had been when the British Army was here.

The Treaty, the way the new Irish Establishment had hounded out the real revolutionary elements of the national liberation struggle, was symptomatic of what the system forced Governments to do; De Valera did it; Lemass and now Lynch were doing it; it was being done in the Six Counties. It was essential for those who were fighting for freedom to know exactly what freedom meant, and learn for themselves in action what it was—not to have to wait for a priest or a landlord to tell them when to begin or when to stop fighting.

*How then did your plans relate to Northern Ireland and how did they materialize there?*

When we decided on the agitation campaign, we first of all decided that we would become engaged in the things I've referred to: housing, land, fisheries, Trade Union agitations and so on. We realized that in the Six Counties, however, before launching these activities, we would first have to work for the establishment of basic Civil Rights in order to establish democracy and abolish discrimination. This would also give us the political manoeuvrability to establish the Republican Movement openly.

This was necessary if we were to engage in the same policies North and South. We decided to support a Civil Rights campaign in the North, took part in marches and demonstrations. We acted as stewards on

these occasions. We had never been a sectarian organization.

We wanted to do away equally with economic and social discrimination against the Catholic and Protestant working classes. As far back as 1963-65 we believed that we couldn't win freedom in Ireland, disestablish the Stormont régime, without making common cause with Protestants and winning their support. However, at the beginning of the Civil Rights campaign, we felt that as a result of the Unionist 'super-race' complex and its attendant bigotries, the Catholics had a kind of sub-race spirit—that they hadn't got the spirit or the will to revolt effectively.

They would, at different times, attempt a revolt, but their rebellion was never cohesive, never really organized. This, we felt, was due to something within their own minds: they were a beaten people before they started. As I said before, the Republican Movement was never sectarian—in fact it is declared in the Constitution of the IRA that we are non-sectarian and non-political (although for a Movement like ours to be non-political always seemed to me to be a contradiction. In revolutionary terms, the fight for freedom is always political—has to be political). However, Republicans always did accept the idea that we were non-sectarian and that we should fight for the freedom of Ireland whether people were 'Catholic, Protestant or Dissenter'.

In too many cases, unfortunately, nothing was done in the past to attract the Protestant people to our standard. We had to establish in the minds of these people that we were dedicated to the emancipation of *all* the people whether Protestant or Catholic. In this sense, the middle-classes in Ireland, whether Protestant or Catholic, whether supporters of the Republican Movement or supporters of a Stormont, or of a Free State régime, were already emancipated! They were free; they were well off financially—whether they had good jobs or good businesses. They had comfortable homes to live in. They were secure and could send their children to good schools. In short, they were emancipated and had no need of our services. The people who needed our services were the working classes, the small farmers, the dispossessed people, the exploited people. Our objective being a socialist objective, we would be able to appeal to a far broader range of the Irish people.

We were only beginning to learn the technique of political agitation and how to conduct a campaign for Civil Rights. We realized what Wolfe Tone had meant two hundred years before when he made his appeal to the men of no property in Ireland. These were the only people who would fight imperialism because these were the people who were being exploited by imperialism, politically, economically and culturally.

*This brings us to the point that has mystified what I might describe as the outsider. How could a programme such as you've outlined, addressed to a revolutionary body such as you've described have led to a split?*

There were, I think, basically three reasons for the split. The first was that there is a certain section of the Republican Movement who

come from middle-class families. Their real interest in the Movement and in Irish freedom is a sentimental one, a traditional, rather than an ideological or socialist one. They were involved in the movement in most cases simply because their fathers or grandfathers were involved in in the 'Tan War or the Fenian Movement.

A lot of these people, many of them still in the Movement, welcomed the socialist policies and are willing to make all the sacrifices: to sacrifice their privileges, their class position in the interests of the majority of the people of Ireland. There was a section, however, who weren't. This section provided the leadership for the split.

The second reason, another group were good revolutionaries and good socialists but disagreed with parliamentary participation because they felt that the Republican Movement, in entering into any of these institutions was going to deteriorate from a revolutionary organization into a reformist organization. They feared that it would become part and parcel of the Establishment by being engaged in the institutions of the Establishment. This was their objection and this was an honest objection. A section of these, however, merely for the reason that abstentionism had been a principle of Republicanism, held rigidly to that as a principle because it had always been, so to speak, a tenet of their faith—not for ideological reasons—also broke away.

The third section included those who had been misled into believing that our concentration on the political and agitationary aspects of revolution was responsible for a lack of armed strength when this was needed for defence in the North. They were led to believe that the Army had gone altogether 'political' and didn't intend to fight. The events in the Falls, July 3rd have disproved this argument.

*It has been suggested, particularly by your opponents of the Provisional Army Council, as you have just said, that your political preoccupations rendered you psychologically incapable of supporting the Bogside and the people of Belfast during the fighting of August 1969. Is there any foundation for this?*

No, there is no foundation for this. As a famous revolutionary once said: 'a guerrilla must move through his people like a fish moves through water.' We, I think, moved through our people like a fish through a desert: we were sticking out a mile. When the guerrilla campaign in the Six Counties finished, because of the efficiency of the Security Forces there and because of the lack of support for us among the ordinary people, the actual fight was dying down. We weren't able to sustain it, to keep it going; we certainly weren't able to expand it.

As the fight in the Six Counties got weaker so also did our financial support from America get weaker. When we finally decided that we would have to end the campaign, our position from the point of view of military material was very bad. We had practically no ammunition left we had very few arms because of our losses in both the Six and the Twenty Six Counties. Our finance at the time the campaign finished amounted to about £12. We couldn't adequately defend the people in the North. We simply did not then have the resources, as we have now.

*But why didn't you?*

In 1964, when the Conference was going on, I went to America. I spent three or four weeks in America with the Clann na Gael. I was constantly pointing out to them why we needed support and emphasizing the changes in our policy and the reasons for them. The reaction I got there was that they couldn't support us financially unless there was some form of revolutionary activity, particularly military activity, actually going on in Ireland. Exiles will support activity, but they won't help to prepare for it. Irishmen whom they would ask for money in the Bronx or in Boston would say: 'What is the IRA doing anyway? Their military campaign is over. All they'll do with the money is live a soft life.'

We decided to go ahead with the agitational campaign anyway. Maybe they would see that as real revolutionary 'activity'. If not, we were committed to going ahead with it, to develop the revolutionary potential in Ireland. I'm not saying we didn't need the money. We did—to start the education programmes, to finance new publicity and publications, to employ lecturers. We'd have taken money from anyone. But we didn't get the support we needed from America.

Most of our organizations in America were orientated towards supporting physical force. In the Constitution of the Clann na Gael it stated that they would support the people in Ireland who were working for the freedom of Ireland, but they would only support those that were using force alone. Those two words: 'force alone', meant that they wouldn't support political or agitational activities in Ireland. I got them to change this at one of their Conventions so that the revolutionary movement in Ireland could use any means to attain the freedom of Ireland.

After this time, whatever support did come was diverted into the Civil Rights Movement, instead of coming to us. So, we were broke. We hadn't got the wherewithall to buy arms. We were in no position, either in England, in the North or in the South to get arms by military means. Further, because we had decided that the agitational policies should develop in a political way—in a militant but peaceful way—any arms raids or military activities would obstruct the development of those political and agitational tactics.

We were in a cleft stick. We couldn't be militarily active because we hadn't got the resources and we hadn't conditioned the people for military activities. We knew from all our discussions, decisions and the conclusions that we had come to, that military activity *alone* couldn't make the revolution. We would first of all have to get the support of the people for military activity. We *had* to start at the beginning, we had to start with our economic resistance campaign and our political activities from scratch.

*So that in the Bogside . . . ?*

There were no arms used in the Bogside by the police when they

attacked the people who barricaded in there. If we had introduced arms into the conflict in the Bogside it would have given the police the excuse to use arms and their potential concentration of arms would have been far greater than ours. The Bogaiders were using certain means of defence—stones, petrol bombs—and the police were using similar means of attack—batons, even stones, water cannon, etc. They weren't using guns against the Bogaiders. It would have been irresponsible for us to have used arms, since a like retaliation by the police would have caused enormous casualties.

In Belfast, it was a different kettle of fish. There you had the police and the B Specials spearheading the armed elements of the right wing mob of the Unionist Party. They came in and they used arms first. They attacked with guns. They shot people dead. They attacked schools and houses and places like that. So that the *only* defence was an armed defence.

*Did you, in fact, provide this defence?*

We didn't provide any *extra* arms. Our policy had always been to maintain local units of the Republican Army in all areas in Ireland and to see that they had what arms were available. There was a small number of arms available in Belfast. These arms were used, and used to very good effect, by members of the IRA in the defence of other areas.

Prior to the Twelfth we knew—as everybody knew—that there were going to be riots in Derry in August. The spontaneous reaction of people in other parts of the Six Counties was to come out in solidarity with the Bogaiders. This led to the situation in Belfast.

*Why didn't you then send in extra arms?*

We didn't think that the police would come in and deliberately shoot up people in the Falls Road area. We felt that the best way for people to engage the police and B Specials was the way that things had developed in the Bogside. We had a very small amount of arms in what we term our GHQ dumps—a very small amount indeed.

We felt that if we, previous to the Twelfth, had sent these into Belfast, into Derry, into Newry, or elsewhere, there might not have been any real fighting in the areas into which we sent these precious arms. This would mean that we wouldn't be able to take them out of that area again and put them where they were really needed. We also felt that dividing these up among different areas would not make an appreciable difference to any one area.

The only way that we could see that we might effectively intervene was to arm sections of the IRA from the South, using the arms that we had in GHQ reserve and using whatever arms were in the possession of the local units all over the South of Ireland. We instructed all the local units to bring any arms they had to central dumps. We mobilized people from different areas and we formed a number of Active Service Units which we billeted in Border areas.

*How then were you able to put up such a determined fight on July 3rd this year against the massive British forces deploying against the Lower Falls area?*

There were a number of reasons for this. First of all, we had learned our lesson. We knew exactly where the vulnerable areas were. Secondly, we used the lull—from the time that the August fighting had finished and we were able to organize a system whereby we could filter arms into the areas where they would be needed for defence. As a result of the August fighting, we got better support from America and other areas for the Movement itself.

This gave us the necessary facilities to obtain the materials that we hadn't been able to get previously. The fighting that had taken place in August of '69 emphasized to our people in America that a section of our people in the North were behind barricades, that they were practically undefended and that it was the duty of the Republican movement, whether in America or anywhere else, to supply the finance and other means to procure defensive weapons. Another very important reason that helped to make this last fight morally and politically effective was the accusations that had been levelled against us—that we were simply interested in politics, that we weren't interested in armed revolution.

This accusation was a big help to us. Not only did these people succeed in getting a lot of other people that were part of the Movement, and split away from it, to believe that we had gone soft by going 'political'—but they also got the Establishment to believe it! This was into our barrow. This was one of the factors that enabled us to supply material to the areas to establish a proper defensive fight when that fight came off.

*What role, if any, does the Catholic Church play in the Citizens' Defence Committees, and in fostering the suspicion that has been engendered that your socialist left wing revolutionary aims are morally dangerous?*

The Catholic Church could, I suppose, be divided into three different sections: The Church first of all meaning all the people who are Catholics; the Church, meaning some of the priests who are part of the people, and the Church meaning the institutional Church organization in Ireland—if you like the Hierarchy and the different Church officers down the line.

First of all, the ordinary people are steadily moving leftward. This is not something that is peculiar to Ireland. It has been happening all over the world. Ordinary working people are beginning to realize that they have a right to the use and enjoyment of the resources of their country, no matter what country.

Now, the Irish people are the same in this as everybody else. The priests who support the people, are a part of the people. The Church, as an official organization, of course, is part of the Establishment and its objective (apart from its religious objectives)—its political objective is to maintain the status quo because it still regards the maintenance of

the status quo as essential to its existence. And this is where the Church is wrong. What is essential to the Church's existence in Ireland—or in any country—is its connection or its involvement with the people, in the execution of the people's own judgments on their own secular affairs.

Our organization is dedicated to the emancipation of the people of Ireland, as I said before. Our policies, in trying to establish the people in control of the resources of the country, are not in any way dedicated to denigrating the Church or being anti-clerical.

This idea has been advocated by Pearse, by Connolly, by Mitchell, Lawlor, Emmet and by Tone. Our policy is in the developing tradition of these thinkers. They re-thought the principles in each generation in the light of the problems that beset them in their times. Our time has its own needs and its own demands. We are prepared to do no less than they. So, this is our interpretation of their ideas. We believe that now is the opportune time to implement them.

#### **Acknowledgement**

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# The Quebec Liberation Struggle— interview with Charles Gagnon

*Knowledge of the Quebecois struggle for independence is not very widespread: perhaps you could indicate its origin and objectives.*

A good way of understanding the struggle in Quebec is to compare it with that of the American Blacks. There is a great deal in common between these two struggles because the two peoples constitute national minorities in North America. Of course, there are also differences because the Quebecois live in a delimited geographical territory with a distinct government elected and theoretically controlled by the people. But the social and economic condition of the Quebecois can be easily compared with that of the American Blacks. While discrimination against Francophones in Canada may not be as overt as against Blacks, it's now well established sociologically that the Francophones of Quebec stand in a position of marked inferiority compared with the Anglophone Canadians.

The entire history of Quebec explains our present struggle for independence, because French Canadians have never been masters of their own destinies. Since the creation of the colony by the French empire, an autonomous development—for instance, the normal growth of a national bourgeoisie common in the 18th and 19th centuries—has not been possible here. The English conquest interrupted all such developments by imposing England's colonial domination on the French settlers. And since that time the people of Quebec have remained a minority in North America, a minority which today does not aspire for reunification with France—although this might once have been the dream of certain individuals—but which seeks to exercise the right to self-determination.

*In the recent election the new Liberal premier tried to appease the workers with the promise of 100,000 new jobs. How great do you think is the danger of this kind of economist co-optation? Some of the unions here participate in the independence struggle.*

That is a hypothetical danger. But Quebec is an integral part of the North American economy; there are no autonomous economic units in North America. There is only large us capital which directly or indirectly controls the economic life of all regions, including Quebec. When Bourassa, the new premier, promises 100,000 new jobs at the same time that us economic advisors foresee increased unemployment in the us, I think Bourassa is in for a lot of trouble. The North American economy is unmistakably heading for a crisis, one that will accentuate the social crisis created by the black struggle and the growing



resistance to us imperialist escalation. In fact the two crises reinforce one another and this means that the economic situation is likely to deteriorate at an accelerated pace, leading to a far worse situation in Quebec where historically recessions have been felt more deeply than in the rest of North America. As conditions continue to deteriorate the revolutionary situation in Quebec develops—it doesn't matter who is in power. This combination of economic crisis and the question of national independence is naturally explosive, and if we have proper revolutionary organization it can be brought to a head a lot more quickly than some people believe. Of course, a revolutionary movement can't be fabricated, can't be created, but the forces are there now, and it's a question of people who are politically conscious *deciding* to organize. Events can then move very rapidly.

*Perhaps you could comment on another electoral development—the Parti Québécois. Although the leadership of the party is bourgeois, nevertheless its vote has had an astonishing impact in North America because its position is in many ways anti-imperialist—an unprecedented electoral development here.*

There's no question about the importance of the Parti Québécois. In the last few months it has succeeded in crystallizing the sentiment for independence in Quebec, and its massive support indicates with reasonable accuracy the present state of affairs in Quebec. Of course, there's no doubt that the origins of the PQ are petit-bourgeois. The petit-bourgeoisie is frustrated because it can't control its own government—for instance the provincial budget is controlled less by Quebec City than by Ottawa. They are also frustrated because massive imports from the us and the rest of Canada thwart the expansion of the small businesses and small-scale production of the petit-bourgeoisie. This class therefore wants an independent Quebec where their own interests can grow unimpeded. On the other hand most of the population and certainly the overwhelming majority of the PQ voters are either wage-earners or at all events people without a personal stake, without a business to promote, who want an overall change in Quebec for the benefit of everybody. It's very important in this respect that the main electoral victories of the PQ occurred in the workers' districts. So thus far the PQ has served positively in the creation of political consciousness in Quebec.

While the PQ has played a positive role, if a revolutionary organization isn't built now the PQ can become a dangerous and reactionary force. That is, it would be possible for the PQ to obtain the support of the big us corporations—and the official backing of the us—who would do anything to have 'peace' in Quebec. It's clear that the main task of the North American governments is to ensure the optimal functioning of business with the least possible obstruction from the progressive forces of society. One such progressive force is the movement for an independent Quebec. So they wouldn't hesitate to buy a party like the PQ in order to guarantee the 'safe' direction of an independent Quebec. In that event an independent government in Quebec would be even more repressive than the present one towards all leftist movements; and at the same time it could lure the population with the slogan: You have your independence, what more do you want? The people will then

either become completely discouraged with politics and thus apathetic for a long time to come, or—and this has always been a latent tendency among some parts of the population—open to the possibility of direct integration into the US. One mustn't forget that in the 19th century the anti-British movement here was often pro-American. In an independent Quebec that wouldn't change existing social conditions this tendency, still dormant, could revive.

*What are the possibilities of intervention from the US or from English Canada to abort a socialist independence movement?*

The danger is real, but it comes mainly from English Canada. Important US financiers—Rockefeller for instance—have already said that an independent Quebec wouldn't bother them. After all, they know how to further their interests in 'independent' countries. But in English Canada there is a much more emotional reaction to the idea of an independent Quebec, one much more likely to become violent. Recently, for instance, we've seen extreme statements in some papers and the formation of clandestine anti-independence groups. But we've expected this: no colonist accepts voluntarily the de-colonization process. One of René Lévesque's illusions is that such a radical change in Canada as an independent Quebec can come about with friendliness and politeness on all sides. This is of course an impossible dream.

The fight for independence will become more radical as greater numbers of Quebecois realize that this is the only way Quebec can survive as a nation. If the left can then provide the leadership and the means of waging the struggle, it can rally those people now engaged in alternative forms of action who have not yet realized that independence can't come about any other way.

Also, this struggle will develop within the broader evolution of North America, and I, like others, believe that the economic and social crisis—really the crisis of *civilization* in North America—will rise to a point that few people imagine today. This will make Quebec's own struggle seem more immediate to people who now see it as being very distant. For in a stage of intense crisis such as one can imagine as the consequence, say, of military occupation and mass unemployment, at that point, in the context of the thorough deterioration of political life, a revolutionary movement can progress. In a situation where other means of struggle, such as the present rallying of the Parti Quebecois, are still possible, the development of revolutionary struggle is more difficult. But this is not to say one shouldn't continue to organize, for favourable conditions will soon be with us.

*You suggest here a tactic on two levels: first revolutionary development parallel to and against the bourgeois parties, and secondly parallel to the US movement and against American imperialism. How can these tactics be developed in Quebec in the near future?*

From the point of view of revolutionary action in Quebec, where at this moment we are still in the stage of political and social agitation it's imperative to form an organizational framework that will ade

quately co-ordinate the activity of existing movements and politicize already committed workers. But equally it's necessary to accomplish the work of agitation by all means available; agitation that will make increasingly clear that the nature of struggle in Quebec must necessarily take the form of a (*lutte de force*). I think this is a conviction that has not yet become widespread among the mass of committed Quebecois. Of course, the present system tries to maintain consciousness at its present level, actually not because the system has a policy on the national question but because it does have a policy about profit. This sets in motion against the people, especially in a period of intensified struggle, all the forces the system has at its disposal—governmental, judicial, police, and military. The left must act in such a way as to expose ever more clearly what interests these powers defend, interests which of course are not those of the people. This is what I call agitation at this moment—attacks on the judicial, economic, and police systems. Propaganda is simply not enough. Of course, one must agitate for political education, but at the same time one must act to intensify the present situation in such a way that the need to fight to the finish becomes a conviction.

*In the FLQ statement printed in 'Leviathan' (Oct. '69) armed groups are included as part of the initial stage of organization, the stage of agitation. After the recent bombings in New York there's a major discussion going on in the States about the wisdom of such tactics. In Quebec of course the FLQ placed bombs as early as 1963. Could you tell us if you think these tactics were successful in radicalizing the population, and if you believe they are applicable in the US today?*

I have no hesitation in saying that the bombings which took place in Quebec since 1963—of course I don't necessarily approve of every single one of them—have had a tremendous importance in radicalizing the struggle and so have been a very positive influence. For instance, at the time of my arrest with Vallières in New York in 1966, the members of the FLQ, identified with the bombings, were labelled criminals by almost the entire population. But after three or four years of struggle at all levels, one can say today that a great number of Quebecois accept that the FLQ took the only avenue then open to the guerrillas of the revolution. Is this the only means of agitation available today? Is this the only way to radicalize a revolutionary movement? No—there are others. It's merely one among many, and one that has to be used intelligently within a broader strategy.

The situation in the States is obviously not comparable to ours. But over a long period I think that all actions against established power, against corporate and political power, against banks, etc—I think all this can have a positive effect. Perhaps not immediately but sooner or later, for these actions capture the popular imagination. They stay with people, and under circumstances we can't foresee more and more people come to understand the meaning of these actions. They are brought to think about the necessity of revolutionary action, and they are brought to ask themselves whether they too want to participate in revolutionary activity, maybe of a different kind but towards the same ends. If, as I said earlier, a revolution is a truly forceful confrontation, then at some point the people must organize to become a force.

Objectively there exists already one such force: that's the force of the workers who are in the process of production and therefore able to control it. But it's a force that in North America isn't conscious of its power. So one can say the workers have no power, no organized power, although they could, let's say by means of a general strike or work slowdowns or seizure of strategic factories, they could bring us to the critical stage necessary for revolution. It's this process that, in one way or another, we must set in motion. And I think the best way to set it in motion is to attack the power structure and to expose it by means of these acts, propaganda, demonstrations, etc.

I definitely see advantages in the use of violence both here and in the States. As for whether American militants should use the same methods as we have in Quebec, that's a question I would prefer to leave to them. I think however that all oppressed people—and there are several oppressed national groups in North America—must determine the form of their own struggle. But what concerns me deeply is that there be created at the same time a certain co-ordination of all these movements, because there's only one enemy, and it's through such co-operation that we can truly defeat him.

*You and others have just formed a committee of solidarity with the Black Panthers. Could you tell us what the aims of this committee are, and if you expect committees of solidarity with the FLQ or other Quebecois groups to be formed in the US?*

Last week we founded the Committee of Solidarity of the Quebecois with the Black Panthers. The number of participants is still limited but we can already say that there are many people who want to work with us. The immediate goal of the Committee is to make the struggle of the Panthers known in Quebec. The ten-point programme of the Black Panthers is so fundamental that no citizen of any country can object to it. Our first objective is to make the ten points known, and then to demonstrate the connections between that struggle and the struggle in Quebec. For, precisely in order not to waste time and energy in reactionary bourgeois national struggles, we must identify the real enemy, which is us imperialism. One of the best ways of doing that is to show that the us isn't a paradise for everyone, that in the us more than 20 million people are being organized in a revolutionary movement to obtain rights as fundamental as the ones we advocate in our own programme. So this benefits the Quebecois struggle itself. I hope as well that our struggle will become better known in the us, and I would be very proud to see permanent channels of information for our movement set up in the States. We envisage closer co-operation with the Black Panthers in the future. This is the first step in the collaboration of revolutionary groups in North America and in the co-ordination of the struggle. I think that when all movements in North America—whether they be black, Quebecois, white, Puerto Rican—are well enough organized, have gained certain experiences in struggle, and have a reasonably clear idea of the strategy they want to employ against the imperialist enemy, I think they will then be in a position to envisage the forms of a tighter collaboration. Rather than thinking, as in the Communist movement in the past, of an International uniting all pro-

letarians without maintaining the distinctions of each group, I think a more appropriate co-ordinating structure has been thought out by the Latin American movements: that each people undertakes its own struggle, but that out of the interest in collaboration that arises when most of those struggling separately see that their enemies come down to much the same thing, out of this interest a new form of the International can grow, a co-operative organization among national groups.

*The statement in 'Leviathan' argues that in order for the revolution to be fully realized one must have, during and after the struggle, self-determination at all levels. Yet the statement also argues the need of a vanguard. Isn't there the danger of a contradiction here, even if one defines the vanguard, as the FLQ does, as a kind of humble organization, sensitive to the needs and wishes of the people?*

This is a grave problem. It was raised within a group of FLQ militants some years ago in the aftermath of revolutions in other countries. From the beginning the danger which struck us, perhaps because we were not widely spread in Quebec and therefore more susceptible to the anarchist idea of not trusting any form of government, was that as the vanguard structures new forms of social and economic control these can become dictatorial and, after the overthrow of bourgeois government, can develop into a new form of oppression of the people, a directorship so absolute that it contradicts the initial goals of the revolution. We thought about this for a long time, and we decided that the only way to avoid the rise of a new clique after the overthrow of bourgeois power was to convince all militants of the need for autonomy at all levels of the organization. Similarly, that we should convince all militants of the need not only to be responsible for actions but also for the building of their own consciousness and of the political education of the entire people of Quebec as a continuing process. In order to realize this, we felt it necessary to maintain a decentralized organization, without concentrating too much power in the hands of a few people.

But our situation over the past several years has brought contradiction along with it, for the conditions of the struggle force us at a given moment to limit decision-making to a few people invested with great authority. Personally I hold to the same views as earlier, thinking it absolutely necessary to maintain an open situation without a central clique. When we first tried to build a revolutionary organization on the model of the Communist Party, the results under certain circumstances were disquieting.

Our preoccupation with a new form of organization can also be connected up to a certain point with the sentiments of young people, here and in North America and Europe, which tend to negate all authority and emphasize instead work at the strictly individual level. Everything which impedes individual development is considered oppressive and reactionary. Needless to say, there's no question of giving in to this sentiment because it definitely negates all possibility of taking revolutionary action. It's clear that a movement of thoroughly autonomous individuals won't be able to combat the system of oppression and economic exploitation. But it remains true that in a technologically advanced industrial society the needs of the individual for autonomous

growth are greater than in an older or rural society. A revolutionary organization has to be sensitive to these needs without allowing them completely to condition the organization. All possible opportunities should be given to young militants to realize their talents, their potential, their imagination. Maybe it sounds like a dream to create an organization while giving so much consideration to the attitudes of individual militants. But in any event this is a current concern of all militant Quebecois. I, like others, am convinced that a revolutionary organization needs structure, has to become a unified force, because revolutionary action is an action of a collectivity, the action of a class, and not the struggle of a more or less coherent amalgam of individuals. It's truly a class that wages the struggle, and only a class can carry it out. But the organization itself of this class can be sensitive to ideals, ambitions, and values that are more individualistic than collective.

I admit—there's no reason to hide this—that this poses tough organizational problems. But I think these can be resolved if one puts proper emphasis on the political education of militants. We've had valuable experiences in Quebec of small groups which, while pursuing their militant actions, devoted a sizeable amount of time to discussion, reading, and who developed real friendships among their members. On this basis these groups were able to perform difficult tasks, tasks which required real courage and renunciation and understanding of the importance of the fight. In this way each of them flourished as individuals. I think this is very important. Since the struggle will go on for a long time, individuals must be able to develop within it.

*Some people say separatist movements like the one in Quebec or that of the blacks in the US are anti-internationalist and therefore counter-revolutionary. What are your views on this issue?*

The history of the last fifty years is eloquent enough on this subject. Revolutionary organizations that have refused to respond to the real demands of the people's struggle have been doomed to failure. They have remained groups which talk about revolution and entertain many interesting revolutionary projects but who haven't helped the movement progress on the world or regional level. At the moment, in all parts of the world, it's more feasible to rally progressive forces around national struggle than world revolution. For instance, if you were to undertake struggle in Quebec in the name of world revolution, you could certainly mobilize a certain number of militants. But years would go by, and as in other countries there would have been a lot of talk but no action. Especially in the case of national collectivities exploited by the imperialists, there's a far greater chance of building and establishing a party that can motivate the masses for revolutionary struggle if you organize around the question of national liberation. Thus the cause of international revolution is definitely served by developing and winning national struggles. I'm convinced history is clear on this point from the time of the Russian revolution, and that it's by means of national struggle that you can mobilize masses for world revolution.

*Montreal, May 1970*

*Interviewer, Igor Webb*



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## The Crisis of British Anthropology

Two events have transformed the background of post-war anthropology: the colonial revolution leading to the rise of struggles against imperialism, now on the defensive, and, at a different level, the growth of structural anthropology. The one reflects the other, for the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss is an extended post-mortem on the massive perceptual illusion through which a nascent imperialism brought 'savages' into being, freezing them conceptually in their sub-human otherness even as it disrupted their social formations and liquidated them physically. Yet over the last two decades, against this backdrop of displacements, British anthropology has been slowly and steadily disintegrating, its

future distracted between disparate sectors of the 'human' sciences. This article represents a preliminary and tentative attempt to outline the crisis.

### Functionalism: The Suppression of Theory

The secret of the arrested intellectual development of British anthropology must be sought, in the first place, in the *advance* which made anthropology possible in its present form. Anthropology grew up in the context of the discovery of a new technique which finally established the primitive as a legitimate object of study. This technique was fieldwork, the direct and systematic observation of the social life of primitive peoples. Anthropology founded its specificity on this technique and on the object legitimized by it.

Marx once said, 'the origin of political economy as a science does not by any means date from the time to which it is referred as such'.<sup>1</sup> The same could be said of British anthropology, for the conditions of its birth as a *practice* (fieldwork) precisely precluded its birth as a *science*. Fieldwork crushed the development of theory as a specific autonomous level of anthropology. Functionalism existed as a practice before it was formalized as a 'theory'. This is why it could never attain the status of a genuine theory. In his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, published in the same year as the two 'pioneering' monographs of British anthropology—Radcliffe-Brown's *The Andaman Islanders* and Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*—Weber had described the 'functional frame of reference,' as 'convenient for purposes of practical illustration and for provisional orientation'. British anthropology transposed this 'framework' to the level of a theory, conceptualizing the rules and methodology of functionalist *practice* as a substantive *theoretical* system. Thus technique was substituted for theory, and theory collapsed into technique. As one British anthropologist wrote subsequently, 'Malinowski remained unchallenged when he confused general rules concerning the comparative relevance of field data with theories of society'.<sup>2</sup> *The arrested development of pre-war anthropology was the natural product of the sterilizing impact of a functionalism which never developed theoretically, because it was in its essence a pseudo-theory, a handbook of practice disguised as theory.*

### A Pseudo-Theory

Here we can only sketch the outlines of a critique of functionalism, focusing on its mode of *perception* of primitive society, on the *problematic* underlying this perception and the *model* used to validate it at the level of a theory.

1. *Perception*. Radcliffe-Brown isolated two zones of meaning in the primitive world, conceived as an undifferentiated sector without regard to variations in the mode of production. These were rules and behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*.

<sup>2</sup> F. Steiner, *Talbot*, Pelican Books 1967, p. 15.

The unity of functionalist analysis was established on the basis of a relationship of complementarity between these zones. To Fortes, as to most functionalists of his generation, descent (i.e. the attribution or inheritance of material wealth, political power and rights and obligations in general by membership of a certain group defined in terms of kinship) became the major explanatory principle of kinship theory, and descent was 'fundamentally a jural concept as Radcliffe-Brown argued'. Following Durkheim, the latter had remarked, 'what we have to seek in the study of a kinship system are the norms'. Functionalism translated this advice into an axiomatic premise.

The normative focus was complemented by a focus on social relations. Intersubjectivity acquired an overwhelming prominence in the functionalist optic, which reduced the *structure* of primitive formations to the transparency of 'actual social relations of person to person'. The main concepts which functionalism transmitted to political anthropology derived from this obsession with the overt visible stream of social interaction. They could only transcribe an immediately given observable 'reality'.<sup>3</sup>

*This dual focus soon crystallized as the invariant structure of the functionalist approach and provided the essential line of continuity between its pre- and post-war phases.* Descent group theory evolved directly out of the first focus (rules), political anthropology out of the second (behaviour).

2. *Problematic.* To Radcliffe-Brown these poles of analysis were complementary, for, as he explained, 'Actual observation of the way persons do *behave* will enable us to discover the extent to which they conform to the *rules* and the kinds and amount of deviation. . . . Deviations from the *norm* have their importance. For one thing they provide a rough measure of the relative condition of equilibrium or disequilibrium in the system. Where there is a marked divergence between ideal or *expected behaviour* and the *actual* conduct of many individuals there is an indication of disequilibrium. . . .'<sup>4</sup> The concept of equilibrium functioned as the problematic of British anthropology, and functionalism's entire perception of primitive society crystallized within its framework.

3. *Model.* Functionalist 'theory' was a spontaneous theory, a blind unreflective codification of the rules of functionalist practice. Yet functionalism continued to preserve the illusion of a certain scientificity, partly through the quality of its observation but mainly because it gave the appearance of having successfully fused the elements of several disparate pre-functionalist currents of sociology (Montesquieu,

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. 'status', 'role', 'prestige', 'conflict', 'authority', 'sentiment'. Goddard provides a good critique of British anthropology's normative empiricism in *New Left Review* 58. 'Role theory' evolved out of functionalism's intersubjectivism, which also provided the theoretical basis for political anthropology's later assimilation of Game Theory (Barth, Bailey) and of the politics of totalizations ('social networks', 'quasi-groups', 'action-sets' and so on).

<sup>4</sup> *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde (Oxford 1950), pp. 10-11.

Spencer, Durkheim, etc) into a single model which seemed to account for the survival of primitive formations in their *traditional* forms.

Briefly, the model postulated that 'a social system . . . has a certain kind of unity, which we may speak of as a functional unity. We may define it as a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e. without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated'. The primary assumption here, shared by both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, was that this 'functional unity' was the product of a certain *evolution*. To Malinowski primitive formations had evolved to their present state of 'well-balanced equilibrium' through 'age-long historical development'; to Radcliffe-Brown there was not, and could not be, 'any conflict between the functional hypothesis and the view that any culture, any social system, is the end-result of a unique series of historical accidents'. Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown reinforced this assumption differently. Malinowski founded the unity of the model on an interior 'essence' centred on a constitutive subject defined biologically; Radcliffe-Brown, on the other hand, simply assumed its unity analogically, on the model of the human body, which primitive formations were thought to resemble in their coherence and type of articulation.<sup>5</sup>

In short, *the equilibrium model was the product of a transposition to the synchronic plane of an entirely diachronic, because imitative diachrony. This was reinforced metonymically in one case (Malinowski's), metaphorically in the other (Radcliffe-Brown's). But both in the last resort appealed to a purely spiritual principle.*

### The Diachronic Variant

Organicism had become the accepted model in conservative thought as early as the Restoration. Yet its dominant position in British anthropology was determined by a historical fact. The societies which the inter-war anthropologists studied were normally in colonial areas which had been forcibly stabilized by the imposition of colonial government, after protracted conflict in the 19th century.<sup>6</sup> In *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954), however, Leach brought the biological model into question. Faced with a people who had resisted British imperialism for almost a century<sup>7</sup> and whose own organization was inherently unstable, the historical amnesia and equilibrium assumptions of orthodox functionalism collapsed through their own conceptual inadequacy. Leach's book was an *internal* response, a challenge from *within* the framework of functionalism, foreshadowed five years earlier by Gluckman's essays on Malinowski. But the contradictory, conflictual,

<sup>5</sup> Malinowski, quoted by Leach in *Man and Culture*, ed. Firth (London 1968); Radcliffe-Brown, 'On the Concept of Function in Social Science' in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Cohen & West 1968.

<sup>6</sup> See Peter Worsley in *Science and Society* 25 (1961).

<sup>7</sup> See Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (1962) pp. 335 ff. The genocidal policy of punitive expeditions and the Burmese resistance—themes which occupy almost a third of Woodman's massive book, filter through in a few sporadic references in Leach's study.

antagonistic relations on which these authors focused, were integrated into a self-stabilizing system; the internal dynamic of the Burmese and African formations they studied was absorbed into a repetitive, circular history, a history void of any historical necessity, a non-history. Some 15 years later Victor Turner transposed the content of Gluckman's circular diachrony on to the ritual plane, conceptualizing social life as an endless 'dialectical' interplay of structure and anti-structure embodied in *rites de passage*. *The Ritual Process* enunciated the now classic functionalist thesis that even the most apparently subversive rituals merely reinforce the social order: 'the structure of the whole equation depends on its negative as well as its positive signs'.<sup>8</sup> The non-dramatic dehistoricized structure of this simple dialectic thus merely reiterates an image of the primitive totality—a compact, self-enclosed totality revolving endlessly in the same circuit—which was already contained, 15 years earlier, in the work of Leach and Gluckman.

Functionalism's evacuation of time was founded on a deep-seated inability to distinguish between the lexical and the syntactic strata of a given formation, that is, between the visible field of (ritualized and un-ritualized) social interactions and the inner structure of the formation, between the antagonisms on the surface of the social field (competition for power, kinship inequalities, factionalism, feuds, ritual) and the contradictions bound up in that structure. Thus Evans-Pritchard could state that 'the use of the word structure in this sense (i.e. as functionalism understood it) implies that there is some kind of consistency between its parts, at any rate up to the point of open contradiction and conflict being avoided'. 'Structure' was defined to exclude contradictions. History was thus expelled *a priori*, and the justification offered was that the only alternative to 'inductive functional studies' was an evolutionist historicism: 'Modern social anthropology is conservative in its theoretical approach. Its interests are more in what makes for integration and equilibrium in society than in plotting scales and stages of progress'.<sup>9</sup> The idea that structures might be capable of internal transformations, changes induced by a compulsion located in their own realm, or that the study of the transition from one structure to another might be a legitimate theoretical pursuit was thus totally absent from functionalist 'theory'.

### Epistemology and Structure

Structural anthropology, of course, originated in France with the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. But its rise cannot be completely separated from the theoretical stagnation of British social anthropology, given the latter's quasi-hegemonic role within the global spectrum of anthropological research.<sup>10</sup> It was precisely the completely vacuous and quasi-tautological character of Malinowski's functionalism that pro-

<sup>8</sup> *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, London 1969.

<sup>9</sup> *Social Anthropology*, pp. 20, 41.

<sup>10</sup> The extent of this hegemony still needs to be determined more exactly, but at a length which precludes its examination in the present article.

vided the focus for one of Lévi-Strauss's early essays,<sup>11</sup> which counterposed to Malinowski's empiricism the notion that 'anthropology draws its originality from the unconscious nature of collective phenomena'. Here Lévi-Strauss drew on what he had learnt from the development of modern linguistics since Saussure. Genealogically, Lévi-Strauss affiliated himself much more to the phonology of the Prague Circle (particularly Jakobson and Trubetskoy) than to the Saussurian linguistics which had made their work possible. 'De Saussure had not yet discovered the presence of differential elements behind the phoneme. His exposition indirectly foreshadowed, on another plane, that of Radcliffe-Brown, who was convinced that structure is of the order of empirical observation, when in fact it lies beyond it.'<sup>12</sup>

Phonology had displaced the focus of linguistic research from conscious phenomena to their unconscious infrastructure. Focusing on relations and working with the concept of system, structural linguistics aimed at discovering general laws. Radcliffe-Brown's homologous conception of the aim of anthropology was nullified by his empiricism. Linguistics taught anthropology that 'there are no necessary relationships at the vocabulary level'. Lévi-Strauss duplicated the break with empiricism within anthropology: 'a social science is no more based on events than physics is based on sense-perception'.<sup>13</sup>

But although it was the problematic of British anthropology which was revolutionized by the differential focus on structure, the structuralist impact in Britain was conspicuous for its *ambivalence*. As late as 1968 an official handbook could say, 'while the "structural/functional" approach has been broadened and modified in recent years, it is still characteristic of most research in the subject'; eight years earlier a British anthropologist had described functionalism as 'the most characteristic method of modern social anthropology'.<sup>14</sup> Though structuralism produced a disjunction within the field of kinship theory, and later generated a mode of analysing myth which Leach endorsed and exemplified in two remarkable essays, *The Legitimacy of Solomon* and *Lévi-Strauss in the Garden of Eden*, whole sectors of the discipline have remained outside the scope of its fragmented totalization. Political and economic anthropology have been immune to its influence, while the latest research in ritual combines the work of Durkheim and Van Gennep with socio-linguistics in one case (Mary Douglas) and theology in the other (Victor Turner). It is important to ask what were the basic determinants of this disjointed and uneven development.

### Edmund Leach and the Naturalization of Structuralism

Structural anthropology developed from the notion that social facts can be treated, like words, as part of a system of communication. This

<sup>11</sup> *Histoire et Ethnologie*, first printed in *Revue de métaphysique et de Morale* 54 (1949); reprinted in *Anthropologie Structurale*.

<sup>12</sup> *Léçon Inaugurale faite le mardi 5 janvier 1960*, Collège de France, Paris; translated as *The Scope of Anthropology*, Cape, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> *Tristes Tropiques*, Librairie Plon 1955, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> *Research in Social Anthropology*, Social Science Research Council 1968 p. 27; Beattie *Other Cultures* p. 60.

homology between social and linguistic phenomena was the axiomatic basis of Lévi-Strauss's work. To this fundamental axiom was added another, that of the *unconscious* foundations of social facts, the idea that behaviour is a projection, at the level of conscious and socialized thought, of certain universal laws governing the unconscious activity of the mind. *British anthropology either completely ignored or progressively dismantled the system of concepts which grew up around these axioms.*

If it were a question of determining which single living anthropologist in Britain has come to occupy Malinowski's vacant place, it would undoubtedly be Leach. Leach is and always has been a functionalist, not despite but because of *Political Systems* and *Rethinking Anthropology*. Both of these works were projected as one of those decisive moments of the history, or myth, of anthropology, but both in fact replaced one variant of functionalism, conceptually inadequate and outmoded, with another. So in *Political Systems*, to the static equilibrium models of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard he counterposed Pareto's notion of a 'moving equilibrium'; and *Rethinking Anthropology* offered, in place of the orthodox obsession with typologies and modes of classification, an *inductive* mode of analysis based on a 'mathematicized' concept of function; to comparison Leach counterposed generalization, a type of 'inspired guesswork' which aimed at the construction of 'topological sets' of 'patterns'. This was the sort of pseudo-structuralist involution that functionalism could incorporate,<sup>15</sup> and indeed, there was nothing revolutionary in the hypothesis which Leach proposed as an example of this new mode of analysis. The basic 'thesis' of the essay—'and here for once Professor Fortes and I seem to be in agreement'—was reducible to the more general proposition that metaphysical beliefs are specifications of the social structure: 'an individual is thought to be subject to certain kinds of mystical influence because of the structural position in which he finds himself . . .' But how did this differ from *Political Systems*, published five years earlier, in which we were told that 'ritual action and belief are alike to be understood as forms of symbolic statement about the social order' or from functionalism's equally simplistic and mechanical treatment of myth and ritual? For Leach the relationship between them was mediated by 'social structure', which they both transcribed at their own levels. This crude conception predetermined the outer limits of the functionalist analysis of superstructures. For, if myth and ritual were in some sense a 'reflection' of 'social structure', they could only be compared within the limits of a single society. Lévi-Strauss demonstrated the opposite: 'all the elements of the myth fall into place when we compare it, not with the corresponding Pawnee ritual, but rather with the symmetrical and inverse ritual that prevails among those tribes of the American Plains which conceive their shamanistic societies and the rules for membership in the reverse manner

<sup>15</sup> Cf, for example, the following comment by Southall in *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, ASA 2 (1965) p. 117: 'Classification and generalization are no processes different in kind unless the practitioner makes them so. Classification into types seems an almost unavoidable stage on the road to generalization'. Leach has simply divorced and opposed what Southall, an avowed 'structural-functionalist' conceived as complementary aspects of a single methodological structure.

... We have thus defined a Pawnee myth in terms of both its correlation with and its opposition to an alien ritual'.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the few occasions when he attempted a genuine structural analysis, Leach naturalized structuralism, for the camshafts, their shape and speed of rotation vanished and only the 'fit' remained.<sup>17</sup>

Leach's *Pul Eliya* was a reaction against British anthropology's excessive preoccupation with mechanical models. To Leach mechanical models were ideal paradigms of what people *should* do, transcriptions of social structure as Leach understood this,<sup>18</sup> while statistical models represented their *actual* behaviour. This crude disjunction between 'jural rules' and 'statistical norms', the 'ideal' and the 'real', transposed the content of the old disjunction proposed in *Political Systems*, between models and empirical reality, the logical construction in the mind (which is static) and the ongoing chaotic reality (which is dynamic). By an arbitrary reduction grounded in an empiricist notion of reality, Leach eliminated even the possibility of building *unconscious models*, for mechanical models were identified, in their scope and reference, with jural structures, i.e. *conscious* models, and the mechanical/statistical polarity was mapped onto the Ideal/Real dichotomy, that is, it was radically re-interpreted to conform to the invariant structure of the functionalist approach (rules/behaviour).<sup>19</sup> There was no room in this confused equation for any discrepancy between the set of verbal categories which compose the conscious model and the anthropologist's model; the second merely transcribed the first, translating the conscious model into a specialized jargon; at best, it registered the discrepancies within the conscious model which were isomorphic with contradictions in 'reality' (conceived in strictly functionalist terms). *Political Systems* had focused on such a discrepancy, but the idea that the anthropologist himself might perceive a different reality transcending both the conscious model and the empirical field of statistical totalizations, never occurred to Leach. His fundamental error, and the source of so much confusion, was that he conceptualized 'reality' in the standard empiricist mode.

The distinction between conscious and unconscious models is the absolute precondition of a genuine structural analysis. Conscious models are intended to perpetuate phenomena, not explain them. In Althusser's terms, their practico-social function dominates their

<sup>16</sup> In 'Structure and Dialectics', *Structural Anthropology*.

<sup>17</sup> See Lévi-Strauss: 'On Manipulated Sociological Models', *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-, en volkenkunde* 116 (1960), a reply to Maybury-Lewis, following an article by the latter accusing him of discovering non-existent structures for the Bororo.

<sup>18</sup> cf. Gellner, *Mind* 1958 p. 189: 'he (Leach) seems to equate "social structure" with ideas in people's minds as to how their society *should* be ideally organized, with how power should be distributed within it'.

<sup>19</sup> cf. Firth's exposition of Leach in the Foreword to *Political Systems*, vi. 'A consequence of Dr. Leach's analysis was to stress again the distinction drawn by Malinowski and others between "ideal" and "real" (or "normal") patterns of behaviour. But in Dr. Leach's hands this distinction assumes a new importance. To him it is the ideal patterns—the social relations which are regarded as "correct"—which are expressed in the model which gives the structural description of a social system. The necessary equilibrium of the model as a construct means that essentially it is debarred from providing in itself a dynamic analysis.'



theoretical function<sup>20</sup>. The anthropologist's task is to penetrate a people's conscious representations, as embodied in their ideological productions (myth, ritual, marriage rules) and uncover a more fundamental, 'unconscious reality', as Lévi-Strauss showed in reducing the conscious apparent symmetry of Bororo moiety organization to an underlying unconscious asymmetric structure.

The Bororo analysis is a classic example of structural anthropology at its best. Nothing comparable to it has appeared this side of the Channel. Since the time of Curt Nimuendaju (1937) dualistic structures had been widely reported for the tribes of central and eastern Brazil. Lévi-Strauss set out to prove, however, that 'the dual organization of the societies of central and eastern Brazil is not only adventitious, but often illusory'. In the case of the Bororo of the central Mato Grosso the village arrangement presented an immediate and simple topographical reflection of this dual scheme. The Bororo inhabited circular villages divided into two exogamous moieties by an East/West axis; each moiety comprised four clans, and their huts were arranged along the edge of the circle. This diametric structure co-existed with a concentric structure marked by a triple opposition between centre/periphery, male/female and sacred/profane. At the centre was the men's house, strictly forbidden to women and separated by uncultivated scrub-land from the periphery, which was occupied by the encircling family huts owned by the women, according to the rules of residence and descent. One ethnographer had reported, however, that each of the clans was divided into three matrilineal sections, Upper, Middle and Lower, and these turned out to be endogamous, as only members of a particular section, from opposite moieties, could intermarry. Thus the apparent exogamous dualism of Bororo organization, to which the people's conscious model corresponded, was cross-cut by an endogamous ternary class system. Yet the native representations of central and eastern Brazil, and the institutional language in which they were expressed, presumed a type of structure (moieties or exogamous classes) whose *real* role was quite secondary, if not totally illusory. Lévi-Strauss used this analysis to demonstrate that social structures are entities independent of men's consciousness of them and different from the image which men form of them as physical reality is different from our sensory perceptions of it and our hypotheses about it. The affinity of this type of analysis to Marx's own was consciously acknowledged.<sup>21</sup>

### 'Confrontation' in Kinship

If Leach naturalized structuralism, Needham defused it. Because of an

<sup>20</sup> Althusser, *For Marx*, p. 231; cf. 'Social Structure' in *Structural Anthropology*, for conscious/unconscious models.

<sup>21</sup> Postscript to 'Social Structure', op. cit. 344; cf. the following from a review of *Capital* published by the St. Petersburg *European Messenger* in 1872, and quoted by Marx, with approval, in the Afterword to the second German edition: 'If in the history of civilization the conscious elements plays a part so subordinate, then it is self-evident that a critical enquiry whose subject-matter is civilization, can, less than anything else, have *for its basis* any form of, or any result of, consciousness. That is to say, that not the idea, but the material phenomenon alone can serve as its starting-point'.

exclusive concern with systems of 'prescriptive' alliance (those which directly specified the category of legitimate spouse), elementary totalities, with which they were identified, came to be defined by a single type of transformation between their different levels (space, ideology, marriage system)—that is, by a unique mode of classification: dualism. Unlike the other British anthropologists, unlike even Leach whose own work was pseudo-critical, eclectic and empiricist, Needham, it is true, located the weakest link in the chain of functionalist anthropology, its *theoretical void*. The passage is worth quoting in full: 'Sociological laws of functional interdependence have not yet been established in social anthropology, *no general theory has so far emerged* and a succession of testable hypotheses have led (where they have led anywhere) not to abstract formulae of social life but to empirical generalizations. *Rather than now possessing a solid theoretical basis of this kind, social anthropology is in a state of conceptual confusion expressed in proliferating technical taxonomies and definitional exercises*, each new field study offering enough "anomalous" features to lead to yet more typological and methodological pronouncements. We have reached a point of empirical plenitude and propositional futility . . .'<sup>22</sup> Yet Needham's excessively restrictive and anaemic use of the structural method provided a singularly unimpressive response to this situation. In his own work on 'prescriptive' systems, structural analysis became equivalent to verifying the single hypothesis that in societies practising prescriptive alliance social organization and symbolic forms are aspects of one conceptual order, a single scheme of classification in which pairs of opposite but complementary terms are analogically related. Needham has progressively imprisoned himself in the circularity produced by this strange convergence between method and theory, between 'total structural analysis', as he called it, and the particular theory of complementary dualism. Societies founded on prescriptive alliance are taken to be 'the most direct forms known of the social expression of a fundamental feature of the human mind', identified as the logical principle of opposition, and since only the 'structural method' can properly explore its latencies, Needham has arrived at the curious conclusion that 'it is only in the analysis of certain types of society that this method can very profitably be attempted'.<sup>23</sup>

The consequences of this radical emasculation have been twofold: in the field of ritual it has led, to some extent, to the growing emphasis placed on a hermeneutic as opposed to a structural mode of analysis—and to a widespread attitude of disbelief as British anthropology encountered the massive volumes of *Mythologiques*.<sup>24</sup> In the field of kin-

<sup>22</sup> Introduction to Durkheim and Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, ed. Needham (Cohen & West 1963); italics mine.

<sup>23</sup> *Sociologos* 10 (1960), p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Needham dedicates one of his most 'Lévi-Straussian' essays to Jung, whose 'obscurantism' Lévi-Strauss himself found 'quite abhorrent'. The most recent example of this movement *away from* the structural study of primitive ideological formations is Mary Douglas' review of *La cru et le cuit* (*Listener* September 3rd 1970)—her philistinism recalls the theological opposition which has always faced every (real or apparent) attempt to decentre the universe, history and the individual. This opposition between hermeneutics and structural theory is clearly expressed in the dispute between Lévi-Strauss and the Catholic phenomenologist, Paul Ricoeur, in *NRA* 61.

ship it has resulted in an homologous reaction against *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* and, in Needham's case, a deep disillusionment with the whole study of kinship.

Functionalism has seen in kinship the main articulating mechanism of primitive formations. As a type of analysis which defined structure in terms of a given empirical reality and worked within the framework transmitted to it by Radcliffe-Brown, descent group theory had attempted to transcend the empirical diversity of primitive formations by recourse to an *empirical* principle which possessed neither the heuristic value nor the logical status of a model. This was the 'lineage principle' to which functionalism attributed a degree and mode of efficacy comparable only to divine intervention. But the notion that kinship systems could be classified and re-classified according to their type of 'descent', or the functional endo-praxes around which particular descent groups totalized, was based on a limited ethnographic experience, concentrated mainly in the West, Central and Nilotic regions of Africa. Confronted with Australian section-systems, Dravidian kinship terminology, cross-cousin marriage and cognatic systems, the notion was found 'inadequate' to the reality. In *Elementary Structures* Lévi-Strauss had, on the whole, successfully reduced the empirical diversity of kinship configurations to a few simple principles embodied in a finite number of modes of exchange, representable by means of models which surpassed the immediate field of social relationships. British anthropology made two conflicting responses to this challenge.

1. One was an interpretative response, an attempt to substitute real ethnographic objects for the terms of the model. At this level both Leach and Needham came into conflict with Lévi-Strauss. The interpretative response, which began initially as an attempt to break out of the epistemological circularity of empiricist anthropology, rapidly degenerated into a reaction *against Elementary Structures*, an assault on the logical consistency of its basic concepts.<sup>25</sup>

2. The other response was purely defensive. The new generation of functionalists who became identified with descent group theory, debated kinship, its nature and type of intelligibility, without appreciating the role of scientific abstraction or, therefore, fully comprehending the nature of 'alliance' models.<sup>26</sup> Models were construed implicitly as immediately mappable descriptions of particular ethnographic situations, reflections of a given empirical reality, such that if the elements of the first system (model) did not, on scrutiny, bear a strict correspondence

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Korn's assault on Lévi-Strauss in *Bijdragen* 125 (1969) and *American Anthropologist* 71 (1969). In the first of these polemics Korn concluded that 'structure', as Lévi-Strauss uses it, 'seems to provide no more than yet another way of saying that the analytical units of any particular set of elements have no meaning if considered in isolation', i.e. Lévi-Strauss's concept of structure is the *traditional* one according to which the elements of a whole must be taken together as parts of a system. This absurd view makes Radcliffe-Brown's incomprehension of Lévi-Strauss incomprehensible, and explains neither the heuristic bankruptcy of the one nor the heuristic fertility of the other.

<sup>26</sup> Alliance theorists see the rules of matrimony of human societies as variants of a basic 'principle' (Lévi-Strauss) or 'institution' (Dumont), the modalities of which compose a closed set.

to the elements of the second (a given ethnographic scene), the model was taken to be defective. In thus misconstruing the function and level of application of Lévi-Strauss's models, the functionalists failed to comprehend their particular type of adequacy—their capacity to generate transformations—as well as the preliminary work of reduction on which this generative capacity was based.

### The Limits of Structuralism

The previous two sections represent a preliminary and tentative attempt to grasp the precise character of the structuralist impact on British anthropology. It is clear, however, that structuralism's distorted totalization in this anthropology cannot by itself explain the extreme *unpredictability* of that impact. To explain why the recent specializations contemporaneous with structural anthropology, remained *entirely* immune to its influence, we have to focus on a second element, the limits of structuralism itself.

These can only be determined by an exhaustive analysis of the work of Lévi-Strauss. The section which follows will sketch only the outlines of such an analysis.

The suppression of history which has been accredited to structuralism is the product of a certain *problematic of comprehension* common, in its abstract invariance, to thinkers as dissimilar in other respects as Rousseau, Dilthey and Sartre. Structuralism's break with functional anthropology consisted in a sharp and deliberate displacement of the entire axis of comprehension from the phenomenal space of an immediate intuitive encounter with the savage to the noumenal space of *pseudo savages*, established, like any code, by the rigorous non-intuitive procedures of science. This displacement transposed the search for meaning from the level of consciousness to the level of an unconscious, from the domain of experience to that of reality. True comprehension was only possible, according to Lévi-Strauss, at the level of certain unconscious mechanisms, a grammar of the mind through which the anthropologist could finally resolve the primitive/civilized 'contradiction' which had mesmerized anthropology in its prehistory. The methodological function of the unconscious was precisely to provide anthropology with a rigorous basis of scientificity, that is, a principle of research which could penetrate and finally destroy the *otherness* of the primitive.<sup>27</sup>

But in this attempt to break with anthropological empiricism, Lévi-Strauss drew not only on the methods of Marx and Freud—both of whom had insisted that conscious meanings are never the right ones, that the true reality is never the most obvious of realities<sup>28</sup>—but also on Rousseau's 'philosophy of identification'. Hence it could only work on one condition: that there were societies in the immediate phase of the

<sup>27</sup> Cf. E. Fleischmann, 'L'esprit humain selon Cl. Lévi-Strauss', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 1966, No. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Tristram Tropic, Plon 1955 p. 62.

break with the 'state of nature', societies which had in some sense *resisted history*, whose systems of classification (myth, ritual, 'totemism') had *survived history*. For Lévi-Strauss holds that societies think themselves either through such systems, in which case they conceive the past as a timeless model rather than as a stage in the historical process, or through an historical dimension which attributes to each prior stage only a relative value. Totemism can either eliminate history or vice versa incorporate it; in either event, the coexistence of two discrete parallel series, one totemic, the other historical, is inconceivable.

The character of this opposition (history/structure) has become progressively more conflictual within the theoretical space of the Lévi-Straussian system. We can distinguish two instances in its (overdetermined) unity: ethical and methodological. Ethically, Lévi-Strauss has conceived imperialism as a vengeance of history on structure, the latter embodying the essence of the 'human condition' in its regular, crystalline purity—a purity which history, tied to progress and therefore enslavement, has everywhere liquidated.<sup>29</sup> From the methodological viewpoint, history has obscured the agency of unconscious meanings, and so reduced the scope of the ethnologist's confrontation with his 'object'—a confrontation which can only fully succeed, that is, be truly objective, at the level of the timeless unconscious reality encoded in primitive superstructures. If anthropology is to remain a science, that is, truly *comprehend* its object, it can only do so by virtue of a certain type of society, *viz.* 'cold' societies, those which bordered on the 'zero of historical temperature', on Hegel's unhistorical history.

*Structuralism has based its resistance to the incursions of time in a dualist theory of (sociological) knowledge, separating historical and structural analysis, and assigning to each a discrete sector of reality.*<sup>30</sup> But by the very logic of this disjunction or dualism, Lévi-Strauss is forced to vacillate between two options: that of stressing the *complementarity* of historical and structural analysis, and that of asserting their *opposition*. Thus the infrastructures can both be 'primary' (*historically* determinant) and yet remain, after all, an expression of the more basic Reality of the codes underlying all the levels of the social formation.<sup>31</sup>

Structural anthropology has therefore oscillated between *two* models, one absent (and subordinate) the other implicit (and dominant). The absent model recognizes the primacy of the infrastructure while the implicit model dissolves it in the expressive circularity defined by the example of mythical transformations.

Yet the *complexity* of Lévi-Strauss's work is such that it enables us to extract a different and *opposite* theory of history, a theory which exists

<sup>29</sup> *Scopes of Anthropology*, p. 49; *Triste Tropéique*, *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> See the 'Texte Inédit' in Catherine Backes-Clément, *Lévi-Strauss: la structure et le malheur* Editions Seghers, Paris 1970, pp.183 ff. Cf. Noël Mouloud, *Langage et Structures*, Payot 1969, p. 190 ff.

<sup>31</sup> *La Pensée Sauvage*; trans. *The Savage Mind*, London 1968, p. 130. 'Critères scientifiques dans les disciplines sociales et humaines', *Revue internationale des sciences sociales*, 16 No. 4.

in tension with the suppression of history, and so, through this tension, accounts for the real ambiguity of his position *vis-à-vis* history.

This ideological resistance to history and its concomitant dualism coexists with elements of a scientific theory of history compatible with a Marxist science of social formations.<sup>32</sup> This second scientific theory, nowhere presented in a coherent or systematic form, (i) rejects the distinction between 'progressive' and 'stationary' formations as the effect of an ideological perception of history; (ii) insists that history is only one among several possible modes in which men live out their relationship to time, that this relationship is interiorized differently; (iii) affirms that there could never be societies 'without history', except in the sense that they do not live their history historically; and finally (iv) acknowledges that there is no single homogeneous space which we can call 'history' for each of a society's structures (technology, ideology, etc) can be said to possess its own history: history is a complex uneven unity, discontinuous in space as well as 'in time'.<sup>33</sup>

Why then has Lévi-Strauss never operationalized this second concept of history? The answer lies in the circularity of the implicit/dominant model. Because it postulates or assumes a complete equivalence between its parts, that is, never postulates an asymmetry in their articulation, *the structuralist totality can never become the basis of a general theory of precapitalist modes of production*. It follows that structuralism is equally incapable of two things: 1. of constructing *regional* theories (e.g. a theory of the place of kinship in 'elementary' formations); 2. of constructing *particular* theories of different precapitalist modes of production. The limits of structuralism are determined by the limits of its dominant model, an expressive totality imposed by a dualist theory of knowledge in which the superstructures *coexist* with the infrastructure, while the forms of their unity, correspondence and imbrication collapse in the 'gap' between them.

Historical materialism alone offers a theory of social formations which both makes a certain historical evolution the object of a knowledge—stripping the term 'evolution' of the transcendent meaning it may have for some—and confronts this evolution at the level of *structures*.

### The Crisis

The endogenous crisis of British anthropology is thus the unity of two conditions: the acute theoretical stagnation of functionalism, born as a practice and transformed surreptitiously into a 'theory'; and the marginal, distorted and uneven development of structural anthropology, naturalized by Leach and sterilized by Needham.

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<sup>32</sup> We must insist on the *complexity* of Lévi-Strauss's work. His Marxist critics (e.g. Goldmann, Terray, Sève) tend to see it as a simple, homogeneous unity, ideological in its very 'essence'. By dispensing with its complexity, this simplistic conception overlooks the theoretical ruptures latent in it. On the other hand, I have attempted to locate two such ruptures in focusing on Lévi-Strauss's concept of history.

<sup>33</sup> *Race et Histoire*, Gonthier 1967: pp. 43, 66, 32; 'The Concept of Archaism in Anthropology', *Structural Anthropology*; 'Texte Inédit', op. cit.

What is the meaning of 'endogenous' here? The crisis of British anthropology is itself the overdetermined unity of two instances: theoretical/political. Though this article has focussed entirely on the first instance, on the internal crisis of anthropology, its crisis as a theoretical practice, we shall conclude by looking briefly at the second.

That sector of the world which was baptised 'primitive', has undergone a double and contradictory transformation under the impact of imperialism. One part of it (Australia, North and South America) has been physically decimated and socially disrupted: 'there are about 40,000 natives left in Australia as opposed to 250,000 at the beginning of the 19th century, most, if not all, of them hungry and disease-ridden, threatened in their deserts by mining plants, atom bomb test-grounds and missile ranges. Between 1900 and 1950 over 90 tribes have been wiped out in Brazil . . . During the same period 15 South American languages have ceased to be spoken'. The other part (Africa, China, South-East Asia, South Asia) has suffered the impact of capitalism with profound modifications of the traditional social structure, or moved completely out of the orbit of world imperialism. This double transformation accomplished by imperialism has had an effect at two levels within anthropology:

1. The 'primitive totality' which formed social anthropology's traditional object—the 'tribal microcosm'—is rapidly disappearing and will, within a few decades, entirely cease to exist.
2. Traditional modes of fieldwork have become less and less viable, whether because the upsurge of revolutionary and national liberation struggles in territories that were previously the economic and political monopoly of the West has entirely disrupted a traditional pattern of relationships which anthropologists took for granted (colonizing subject/colonized object), and blocked off areas of the world once accessible through the political hegemony of imperialism; or because the integration of particular ethnic groups into a capitalist mode of production confronts the anthropologist with a new object requiring a new technique.

Thus British anthropology is not only stagnating as a theory, it is also *threatened as a practice*. In addition to its own specific crisis—the failure to constitute itself as a science—it is affected by the global crisis of anthropology, Marxist anthropologists must expose the myth that anthropology has any future as an integrated discipline, and counterpose to this myth and the archaeology behind it, a new practice combining with the political emancipation of the surviving 'primitive' groups—their emancipation from imperialism and capitalism—research into the genocidal practices of imperialism and a truly scientific comprehension of the social and cultural ensembles it has destroyed,

Communism is a vast international conspiracy;  
America must fulfil a historical destiny as  
policeman to the world; its actions are  
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## *Sexual Oppression and Political Practice*

The problematic of Reimut Reiche's *Sexuality and Class Struggle*\* is still largely foreign to socialist thought in Britain. In Germany, however, the necessity for Marxists to supplement their revolutionary theory in the light of Freud's discovery of the unconscious was already made clear by the rise of Hitlerism. Besides other mistakes, the KPD failed completely to understand the psychological reservoirs that the Nazi movement drew on, despite the warnings of such Marxist intellectuals as Ernst Bloch, who wrote in 1930 that 'the vulgar Marxists are not keeping watch on what is happening to primitive and utopian trends. The Nazis are already occupying this territory, and it will be an important one' (*Inheritance of Our Time*). In the 'thirties and 'forties the theorists of the Frankfurt School attempted to use both Marx and Freud to interpret the Nazi phenomenon, but works such as their *Studies in Authority and the Family* (Fromm, Horkheimer, Marcuse *et al.*), despite their undoubted value, completely lack a political and strategic dimension. In the advanced capitalist countries today, the necessity of integrating Freud into revolutionary theory

has been far more widely accepted in the new student-based anti-capitalist movements than it ever was in the old Communist Parties. This is particularly so in Germany, where the work of the Frankfurt School was rediscovered by the student movement in the early 'sixties, and in North America, where the later works of Marcuse, distinguished from his Frankfurt colleagues by a far firmer political commitment, have been most influential. In both countries the following assumptions are now widely accepted:

1. The maintenance of capitalist class rule relies not only on physical coercion and ideological mystification, but also on reproducing a personality structure that fits the given social reality.
2. Besides economic exploitation and political and ideological oppression, people under capitalist society also suffer (certainly not in the same measure, but differentially according to social class and group) from a specific oppression at the psychological level, from which the social revolution can and must provide liberation.

Within these assumptions, different analyses are offered, and different strategies based on them. In the extreme case, the anarcho-situationist groups all but deny the persistence of traditionally recognized forms of oppression, and put forward a model of contemporary capitalism as dependent solely on psychological oppression, a strategy that sees class society defeated by the 'return of the repressed', and an organization and tactics confined to the symbolically terrorist actions of small groups.

But Leninists also have recognized the importance of psychological oppression and the movements that challenge it, and sought new forms of practice and organization that will pit these forces against the state.

### Reiche's Theses

Reimut Reiche starts from the theoretical guidelines of Marx and Freud as filtered through the Frankfurt School, and from the practical experience of the West German SDS in its anti-authoritarian phase. His book represents an attempt to draw strategic conclusions from the theoretical analysis of practical political struggle.

In summary the broad lines of his argument are as follows:

1. In early and classic capitalism, the needs of capital accumulation required not only the external compulsion of hunger and the work-house, but also an internal compulsion, most perfectly embodied in what Freud called the anal, or obsessional, personality type, 'the true, pre-eminently conservative vehicles of civilization' (*Libidinal Types*, quoted by Reiche, p. 39). Monopoly capitalism, however, as one of the methods of coping with the over-production problem, needs 'individuals to learn to consume; to consume what the system wants and

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\*R. Reiche: *Sexuality and Class Struggle*, published by NLB, 1970.

when the system wants' (Reiche, p. 46). 'The classic anal obsessional character must (therefore) be made more flexible' (ibid.). The system can afford an increase in 'real and apparent opportunities for sexual liberty' (ibid.), and by granting these it gains added ideological legitimacy, while 'latent (repressed) desires continue to serve their adaptive function' (ibid.).

2. The decline of the independent entrepreneur, the increased role of the state in the socialization of children, the development of the media, and in Germany the experience of fascism have led to a loss of parental authority, so that young people today cannot build up the strong autonomous egos characteristic of the classic bourgeois through constructive conflict with their parents. They correspondingly fail to reach the state of genital primacy in which the component instincts of infantile sexuality (oral, anal, phallic) are subordinated under the primacy of the genital zones and directed to the formation of a mature love-object.

3. Demands for sexual emancipation (i.e. for the removal of socially imposed restrictions on sexual practice), such as Wilhelm Reich's Sexpol movement campaigned for in the 1920's, are no longer a means of anti-capitalist mobilization, and no longer come to grips with real forms of oppression. The contemporary forms of sexual oppression are rather the manipulation of sexuality via the media and the impossibility of truly satisfying sexual relationships both of which derive from the breakdown of the genital character. Manipulation by the 'agencies of social conformity' (p. 61) preys on the unintegrated component instincts. Its aim is not merely to sell commodities, but to instil satisfaction with the social environment of contemporary capitalism, and in the last instance to ensure a mass base for counter-revolutionary mobilization. (Reiche stresses that fascism has not been historically overcome in W. Germany.) The typical personality type today, whose façade of genital behaviour does not correspond to a genital character, 'lives(s) in a permanent fear of castration . . . He has to be permanently changing his fetish, and quite often the person on whom he endows it as well . . . Manipulative fashion . . . exemplifies the influences which prevent this type from getting beyond fore-pleasure'. 'Advertising also dictates . . . how one goes to bed with somebody, which (has) to be adopted if attractiveness is to be kept at full market value' (p. 97).

4. Defensive action against this repressive desublimation is a major political priority. It is only 'the *adult* individual in the psychoanalytic sense' (p. 134), i.e. the individual of genital primacy, who, because his component instincts are unified and controlled by the ego, is capable of controlling and changing reality. To the extent that 'the ego loses . . . its classic function of mediating between id, super-ego and outside world' . . ., 'it simply acts as an agency for the internalization of external authority' (ibid.). The mechanisms of defence of the ego recognized by psychoanalysis now have a revolutionary role. Strong egos able to perform their 'classic function' are a precondition for sustained anti-capitalist struggle, even if a 'post-genital' character will be possible in a future liberated society. This involves cultivating the classic bourgeois qualities of genital primacy: love and fidelity, and firm ego-ideals, as a basis for collective political action.

## Ego-Ideals and Revolutionary Solidarity

Reiche's book raises important questions for revolutionary socialists in Britain. Because of the relative weakness of the new revolutionary forces in this country, the clinical isolation of psychoanalysis and the lack of a Marxist theoretical tradition, its themes may appear foreign to many readers, but the problems it covers will become increasingly important here also as anti-capitalist struggle develops, and problems of strategy are raised. It is a political text backed by a weighty theoretical argument, which merits serious discussion by British Marxists, and I would like to start this off by a few of my own criticisms.

Firstly, Reiche equates the bourgeois genital character, as the 'highest' form of sexual organization so far developed, with the capacity for 'free' and 'rational' action, and therefore for organized revolutionary action. But how true is it that the classic bourgeois character traits have ever gone together with revolution? Both in Britain and in European social-democracy, it was the 'respectable' working class, which internalized the virtues of thrift, abstinence and personal responsibility, who built up the traditional institutions of the workers' movement. But when the capitalist state has been at all seriously challenged by mass action, this has always involved mobilization of the 'rough' workers and unemployed outside the trade unions and social-democratic parties, who really did have nothing to lose, although these sections certainly lacked both the bourgeois ego-qualities and the ego-ideals of the workers' movement that Reiche sees as built upon the basis of the genital character. No doubt in classic capitalism the ruling class had no need to manipulate the unintegrated pregenital drives of the unorganized working masses. They needed no encouragement to consume, and direct repression was the obvious means to control their sporadic rebellions. But the genital sexual organization of the labour aristocracy itself served as a means of social control, keeping organized working class action to the eminently 'rational' paths of trade-unionism and parliamentary reformism.

On the other hand organized revolutionary movements exist even in late-capitalist society, without requiring the genital personalities that Reiche is so anxious to re-establish. The Black Panther Party in the USA is based on the lumpenproletarian ghetto masses, and the structure of the ghetto family is well known to Freudian analysis. The black American socialization pattern does not set up the norm of genital primacy, and does not provide authority figures in conflict with whom children can build up strong egos. It is certainly the case that within organizations such as the Panthers black people have transformed not only their ideology, but also their social behaviour and character structures. These organizations have, as Reiche would say, set up new ego-ideals for black people. However it would be absurd to imagine that these ego-ideals presupposed, at the individual level, the establishment of genital primacy characteristic of Freud's classic bourgeois, the autonomous individual whose ego keeps a sage balance between id, super-ego and outside world, and who is therefore capable of 'free' and 'rational' action.

This supposedly 'highest' form of sexual organization is in reality a personality structure that serves the needs of members of a specific class in a specific form of society. It is the personality structure, not of rational action in general, but of the individual rationality of the bourgeois entrepreneur, whose ties to his own class, even, are purely instrumental ones, and whose real loyalties (i.e. those not bounded by 'rational' self-interest) are in fact to the family that he dominates and oppresses. For an oppressed class or community, however, this relationship of psychic forces, in which class comrades are treated by the ego as part of 'the outside world', is no advantage, but a disadvantage. An oppressed group needs to make its decisions collectively—its sole strength rests in its solidarity—and it needs its members to put loyalty to the collective above considerations of self-interest. Reiche at one point insists that the new revolutionary movement has to construct collective ego-ideals which will perform for it the equivalent function that the *solidarity, discipline, consciousness of future victory* and *communist utopia* did for the workers' movement (p. 123). But the first two of these aspects of the workers' movement's collective ego-ideal are very different from the last two. Solidarity and discipline are not, for an oppressed group, contingent ideals that might be replaced by others; they are the very precondition for its collective action. No revolutionary movement can be composed of Freud's well-developed egos who join together for a common goal. Far from being the precondition for revolutionary action, genital primacy is likely to vitiate it.

### The Relaxation of Sexual Controls

Secondly, Reiche's analysis of sexual oppression in contemporary capitalism relies on the concept of repressive desublimation, first developed by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization*. Reiche quotes Marcuse: 'Sex is integrated into work and public relations and is thus made more susceptible to (controlled) satisfaction. The range of the socially permissible and desirable satisfaction is greatly enlarged, but through this satisfaction, the Pleasure Principle is reduced—deprived of the claims which are irreconcilable with the established society. Pleasure, thus adjusted, generates submission' (Reiche, p. 50). What always remains unclear about the concept of repressive desublimation is exactly *how* the enlargement of socially permissible pleasure generates submission. The manipulation of sexuality in advertising, fashion, etc. is undoubtedly oppressive—in particular it reinforces the sexual-objectification of women, and creates, as Reiche correctly points out, false needs and false ideals. But is this specific form of oppression really *generated* by desublimation (i.e. by the extension of the range of socially permissible satisfaction)? What, for Marcuse, makes this measure of desublimation *ipso facto* repressive, is a concept of the ruling class as a subject that dominates society in a literally totalitarian fashion and can plan the most fundamental social transformations in a voluntaristic way—a concept already present in Marcuse's writings on the transition from liberal democracy to fascism, in the early 'thirties. This concept shows through in the constant use, by Reiche, of terms like 'the manipulators', who are conceived as giving concessions with one hand in order to ensnare the masses even more firmly with the other. In reality, despite these fondly held myths of vulgar Marxism, 'the manipulators' do not

exist. There are on the one hand *economic* subjects, the monopoly corporations, who attempt to manipulate the masses as consumers by explicit sexual symbolism as well as other means. Fashion, to the extent that it is manipulative, is in their hands. There are on the other hand *political* subjects: the State, the ruling class political parties and ideologists, who engage in ideological manipulation through the media, and who also play, to a greater or lesser extent, on unconscious imagery. But it is hard to see how the latter could take advantage of *overt* sexual symbolism. Use of the new opportunities that desublimation provides would precisely vitiate their mobilizing effect. And what does not exist is an invisible yet omnipresent body that co-ordinates all ruling class manipulation into one unified practice, with the power to plan such weighty changes as a relaxation of sexual taboos when it serves the needs of the circulation of capital.

In the absence of such a super-human and omnipotent class-subject, it is the responsibility of those who uphold the theory of repressive desublimation to prove the necessary connection between the contemporary relaxation of sexual norms and its repressive function. I would argue that there is no such connection. The abolition of certain sexual taboos in the advanced capitalist countries over the past four decades (with the interruption of fascism in some cases) is a substantial progressive development, freeing countless people from psychological and physical terror. There is no inherent reason why the ruling class cannot allow this development, any more than it has to disallow higher wages. Especially if it relieves much unhappiness, as Marcuse admits, then it is likely on balance to be seen by them as reconciling the masses to the existing social order, just as higher living standards do, seen in purely static terms. At the same time the relaxation of sexual norms is used, just as technological innovations are, by monopoly capital in the constant competitive struggle to realize surplus-value. It is also used in ways that Reiche sees as reinforcing social conformity; he correctly attacks the role that myths such as 'love in an exotic setting', 'staying young and attractive forever', the identification with film stars and sports heroes, have in contemporary capitalism. But these myths are all used by *private* capital for the specific purpose of selling commodities. They are not manipulated by a central agency, they are not aimed at reinforcing social control, and they are constantly exploded and defused in everyday life by millions of people who have never heard of Freud or Marx.

### Women's Liberation

Finally, Reiche's argument suffers from the limited political experience of the German student movement. The most astonishing absence in it is the question of the oppression of women in contemporary capitalism; a further absence is any discussion of 'youth culture'. It would seem that the SDS 'sexual campaign', restricted to the classic demands of bourgeois emancipation (i.e. freedom of sexual relations, universal access to birth control, and abortion) never took up the far more subversive demands of women's liberation. This absence leads Reiche into some serious political errors. He realizes that Freud's categorization of male sexuality as anacletic, and female sexuality as narcissistic,

only applies to 'capitalism and the power systems that preceded it' (p. 90). But since it is the strong ego of the genital character, which Reiche wants to restore, that founds both the bourgeois male's anaclitic attachment and the female's narcissistic attachment that complements it, and since Reiche calls for the re-establishment of genital primacy as the 'highest' form of sexual organization so far attained, it is logical to conclude that he is happy to accept the allotment of anaclitic and narcissistic sexual roles to men and women respectively, until, in socialist society, mankind can finally turn to the construction of the 'post-genital' character.

The women's liberation movement in North America exposes the reactionary consequences of such a position. As in all periods of profound social crisis, oppressed groups who would otherwise have remained quiescent have begun to organize and engage in struggle. The women's movement in the US ranges from the bourgeois feminism of the National Organization of Women through to the women's caucuses of revolutionary socialist organizations. It is now commonly accepted in the American revolutionary movement that the oppression of women is not confined to the economic level (division of labour in production, education and the family), but is maintained and reproduced by a sexist ideology that teaches women's inferiority, and socialization patterns that structure an oppressive differential between the male and female character. Within the revolutionary movement women therefore organize separately not to fight against men (feminism), but to combat sexist distortions of revolutionary practice and to struggle for an equal role with men in all fields of revolutionary work. Towards the masses, the revolutionary women's groups win women for the revolution by campaigning both on economic issues (equal pay, job + education access, child care facilities) ideological issues (sexual-objectification of women in advertising and the media) and psychological ones (transformation of inter-personal relations and patterns of socialization). The strength that the women's movement derives from the very real and multi-dimensional oppression that women experience makes it counter-revolutionary to demand the maintenance of a bourgeois character-structure that condemns women to an inferior position until after the revolution.

The weakness of the ego in contemporary capitalism leads spontaneously to a certain alteration of the classic masculine-feminine opposition, and Reiche claims that 'both sexes . . . are beginning to adopt a "mixture" of both attitudes: they are kept in a state of narcissism like the bourgeois woman, without being able to compete with her "self-contentment"'. And they love like the man, but without his power to remove repressions and reinstate perversions' (p. 91). Reiche thus attempts to justify his idealization of bourgeois sexual relations by counterposing the 'real happy love' allegedly produced by the union of anaclitic and narcissistic personalities to the unhappy sexuality of contemporary capitalism. Examples of 'late-capitalist sexual practice' he discusses include institutionalized promiscuity within marriage, the American institution of dating, and the 'convergence of the sexes' in behaviour, appearance, clothing, speech and gesture. All these are said to lead to permanent unhappiness and frustration. With the first two this may well be true. But Reiche's

case against the 'convergence of the sexes' is based on seeing this only in terms of 'girls . . . wearing aggressive, "masculine" fashion accessories . . . such as thick chains round the waist with trousers and skirts, knee-high boots resembling riding boots, panama hats tied under the chin', 'men wear(ing) long hair and walk(ing) erotically', and 'both sexes buy(ing) their clothes in the fashionable men's boutiques' (p. 119). He ignores something that is possibly far more significant than these manifestations, the sexuality of the 'youth culture' that has swept the advanced capitalist countries, especially North America, in the last decade, and is still accelerating.

This youth culture represents, at least potentially, a convergence of the sexes not towards the 'weak solution' described by Reiche, but towards a 'strong solution' in which people of both sexes are able to love like the traditional bourgeois male, but without his craving for possession and dominance, and to be loved like the bourgeois female, but without her passivity and submission. Within the youth culture, the convergence in clothing and behaviour is not one in which men 'walk erotically' and 'advertise themselves as sexual objects' (i.e. mimic the oppression of women in bourgeois society), nor is it one in which 'both sexes buy their clothes in the fashionable men's boutiques'. Clothing in the youth culture is typically *functional* on the one hand (jeans/ponchos, etc) and *decorative* on the other (jewellery, scarves, headbands, etc). It radically rejects the transformation of the human body into a fetish that Reiche describes, and that is typically effected in contemporary fashion by the use made of patent leather, plastic and metal to create non-human shapes and textures that play on the unintegrated component instincts. It also rejects the novelty aspect of fashion, and makes a virtue out of patching and renovating old clothes. A further expression of this new sexuality is the unashamed nakedness of Woodstock and the Californian beaches, the mirror opposite to the exhibitionism of *Ob! Calcutta*. The youth culture has, of course, not created the utopia it imagines it has, and will not be able to do so under capitalism. It has by no means completely broken down sexual oppression; among the 'freaks' women are often sexually exploited in a highly traditional way, just as many agrarian communes reproduce the patriarchal division of labour (men in the fields, women in the home). But in the course of a very few years it has gone a long way towards liberating sexuality from many of the repressions and rigid divisions built up by bourgeois civilization. The consequent rehumanization of sexuality (i.e. redirection towards the human body and personality, and extension of libidinal relationships outside the monogamous couple and nuclear family) has been accompanied by a mass rejection of attempts to manipulate the component instincts by commodity advertising and the media, despite the fact that young drop-outs have certainly not rebuilt, consciously or otherwise, the strong, autonomous egos of the classic bourgeois

### The Revolutionary Alliance

What should be our conclusion? We need no defensive action against repressive desublimation, as there is no such thing. Sexuality is no merely another means through which the ruling class tricks the masses into submission. There is therefore no need to tuck in sexual loose ends



by rebuilding the strong egos of the bourgeois entrepreneur, so that 'the manipulators' cannot get at them. Young people are not succumbing in droves to planned manipulation—they are increasingly rejecting the roles that contemporary capitalism offers them, socially and sexually. The relation of sexuality to class struggle is not where Reiche looks for it, but elsewhere. Sexual oppression, mediated by sexist ideology and the personality structures created in the bourgeois family, is a specific form of oppression, which women, and sexual minorities, undergo. Its relationship to economic exploitation, and to political and ideological oppression in class society, may vary, but it invariably serves the maintenance of class rule by creating divisions among the people. If political and ideological oppression, as historical experience has proved, are not automatically overcome under socialist economic relations, then sexual oppression, like racial oppression, is likely to be even more persistent. Those who suffer from it need to organize separately to ensure that the revolution overcomes their specific oppression, and Marxists must encourage them if they want a united front against the ruling class and its State.

Behind Reiche's analysis lies the whole historicist distortion of Marxism, as relayed by Lukács and the Frankfurt School. Class rule is seen as a simple relationship between two constituted groups—capitalists and working class. Politics, ideology, and now sexuality, are only forms through which the class struggle is mediated. The attitude of revolutionaries to sexuality is therefore a purely instrumental one. The socialist revolution is simply the revolution of the working class against the capitalist class, and a Marxist policy towards sexuality is determined by whatever best serves this class struggle. Unfortunately, the real world is not so simple. The historical experience of proletarian revolution, as theorized by Marx, Lenin and Mao, shows that economic exploitation, political and ideological oppression, are not all reducible to a common essence of class rule, still less are the relationships of national, racial and sexual oppression, which have even greater autonomy from the economy. This does not mean that these phenomena have no role in the socialist revolution. For the class alliance necessary to bring about the socialist transformation is not defined exhaustively by capitalist relations of production. A revolutionary class alliance is specific to each complex historical situation, and consists of all those classes, groups and peoples who can be mobilized against the common enemy. No revolution with a socialist outcome has so far derived its force solely or even perhaps predominantly from economic exploitation, but rather from the whole set of oppressions from which the revolutionary forces can legitimately promise liberation, and which the ruling class cannot.

In the us today, a revolutionary class alliance is forming which is drawing much of its force from sexual oppression. After the black movement, the women's liberation movement is at present the second strongest force in the American revolutionary movement. The gay liberation movement, scarcely a year after its birth, is also striking blows at the American state, with extremely violent confrontations with the forces of repression in New York and elsewhere. Reiche ends the post-script to the English edition of his book by hoping that English and American comrades will be able to relate the problems it deals with to

their own political work. From this side of the Atlantic, it is difficult to judge whether American comrades will be able to fulfil Reiche's hope. In Britain at least, where the revolutionary movement, and the movement against sexual oppression as part of it, is still at an early stage of development, Reiche's book will prove a stimulating and important experience for many Marxists, and confront them with the question of the relationship of sexuality to class struggle for the first time. But like all pioneering and exploratory works it must be studied critically, and not taken up mechanically as a new intellectual fashion.

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See inside back cover

There can be few issues that have caused as much bitterness and disagreement on the Left as the nature of the state of Israel. For a long time it attracted the sympathy of many both because of Nazi genocide and because of the social character of the régimes it faced in the Middle East. However, 1956 showed it in active collusion with Western imperialism, and after 1967 the rise of the Palestinian resistance movement refocused attention on the colonial and exploitative character of the Zionist state. But discussion of Israel has rarely been based on any class analysis of that society, and the confusion outside Israel has been compounded inside the country by the almost unanimous support of the Israeli working class for Zionist policies.

Yet such an analysis is vital not only for Israeli revolutionaries but also for anti-Zionist forces in the Arab world: there can be no successful revolutionary anti-Zionist strategy without a clear understanding of the inner workings of the society which is under attack. In this issue we are printing such an analysis, written by three Israeli revolutionaries, members of the Israeli Socialist Organization, a militant anti-Zionist party working in Israel. It is a continuation of the debate in NLR 57, inaugurated by Fawwaz Trabulsi, on the class character of the Palestinian revolution and its relation to revolution in the Arab states.

Although the authors hold that Israel is the watchdog of imperialism in the Middle East, Israel is in fact not the only imperialist client in the area and its special position has given it a considerable measure of autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. At times Israeli aggression has weakened the security of Western imperialist interests elsewhere; Israeli victories in 1948 and in 1967 unleashed revolutionary forces in the neighbouring states, and in the Arab peninsula. In these instances it is the reactionary Arab régimes that safeguard Western interests, and imperialism's attempts to co-ordinate its Arab and Israeli allies have encountered increasing difficulty in recent years. The Rogers 'peace' plan has made clear that the continuation of this balance necessitates US-Soviet collusion.

Norman Geras' article contributes to the controversy about the role of the concept of commodity fetishism in the development of Marxist thought. This debate is not about the history of ideas but about the nature of Marxism as a critical and scientific theory of bourgeois society and as

a political practice leading to its destruction. The article is of particular interest in that it seeks to grapple critically with some of the central theoretical propositions put forward by Louis Althusser.

This year sees the hundredth anniversary of the Paris Commune. We are therefore publishing an article written by Blanqui shortly before the Commune, on the technical aspects of urban insurrection. It is a reminder of Blanqui's role as a revolutionary. Although he was essentially a pre-Marxist figure, Marx and Engels themselves always referred to him—whatever their disagreements—with respect, and never treated him, as some have done, as a simple adventurer.

Also in this number is a review by Lucio Colletti of Fiori's biography of Gramsci, now published by NLB. The review was written at the time of the book's publication in Italy. It is a sharp repudiation of attempts to portray Gramsci as some kind of precursor of the Popular Fronts and hence to establish a continuity between him and the current policies of the Italian Communist Party.



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Since 1967, Russell has died, and the world has come to hear of My Lai. This book is intended to assist Russell's first request of the tribunal 'to prevent the crime of silence'.



Haim Hanegbi  
Moshe Machover  
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## The Class Nature of Israeli Society

Israeli society, like all other class societies, contains conflicting social interests—class interests which give rise to an internal class struggle. Yet Israeli society as a whole has been engaged, for the last fifty years, in a continuous external conflict: the conflict between Zionism and the Arab world, particularly the Palestinians. Which of these two conflicts is dominant and which is subordinate? What is the nature of this subordination and what is its dynamic? These are questions that everyone involved with Israeli society and politics must answer.

For revolutionaries inside Israel these questions are not academic. The answers given determine the strategy of the revolutionary struggle. Those who consider the internal class conflict to be the dominant one concentrate their efforts on the Israeli working class and attach secondary importance to the struggle against the colonizatory, nationalistic and discriminatory character of the Zionist state. This position sees the external conflict as a derivative of the

internal one. Moreover, in this perspective, the internal dynamics of Israeli society will lead to a revolution in Israel, without this necessarily depending on a social revolution in the Arab world.

The experience of classical capitalist countries has often demonstrated that internal class conflicts and interests dominate external conflicts and interests. However this theory fails to hold in certain specific cases. For example, in a colonized country under the direct rule of a foreign power, the dynamics of the colonized society cannot be deduced simply from the internal conflicts of that society, since the conflict with the colonizing power is dominant. Israel is neither a classic capitalist country nor is it a classic colony. Its economic, social and political features are so unique that any attempt to analyse it through the application of theories or analogies evolved for different societies will be a caricature. An analysis must rather be based on the specific characteristics and specific history of Israeli society.

### A Society of Immigrants

The first crucial characteristic of Israeli society is that the majority of the population are either immigrants or the children of immigrants. In 1968 the adult (i.e. over 15) Jewish population of Israel numbered 1,689,286 of whom only 24 per cent were Israeli-born and only 4 per cent of Israeli-born parents.<sup>1</sup> Israeli society today is still an immigrant community and has many features typical of such a community. In such a society classes themselves, not to mention class consciousness, are still in a formative stage. Immigration produces an experience, and a mentality, of having 'turned over a new page in life'. As a rule the immigrant has changed his occupation, social role and class. In the case of Israel the majority of the immigrants come from the petty bourgeoisie, whether they are from urban areas in Central and Eastern Europe or from towns and cities in the Arab world. The new immigrant looks forward to changing his place in society. Moreover he sees that all the advantageous positions in the new society are filled by earlier immigrants and this enhances his ambition to climb the social scale through long, hard work. The immigrant considers the actual social role he occupies as transitional. This applies to Israeli workers as well. His father was rarely a worker, and he himself lives in the hope that he too will one day become independent, or at least that his son will be able to do so. The class consciousness and pride which exist among the British and French proletariats, do not exist in Israel, and appear odd to many Israeli workers. An English worker, if asked about his origins, will almost automatically reply in class terms ('I'm working class'), and will define his attitudes to other people in terms of similar class concepts; an Israeli worker, however, will use ethnic categories and consider himself and others in terms of being 'Polish', 'oriental' and so on. Most people in Israel still consider their social position in terms of their ethnic and geographic origins, and such a social consciousness is obviously a barrier hindering the working class from playing an independent role, let alone a revolutionary one aiming at a total transformation of society.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical Yearbook of the Israeli Government, 1969.

No working class can play a revolutionary role in society while the majority of its members desire to improve their situation individually, within the framework of the existing society, by leaving the ranks of their class. This truth is reinforced when the proletariat does not recognize itself as a stable social class with its own group interests and its own value system in conflict with those of the existing social order. The impulse towards a total transformation of society does not arise easily in a community of immigrants who have just changed their social and political status and who are still living in conditions of high social mobility. This does not mean that the Israeli working class cannot become a revolutionary force in the future; it merely implies that today political activity inside this class cannot proceed from the same assumptions and expectations as apply in a classic capitalist country.

### A Society of Settlers

If the uniqueness of the Israeli working class consisted only in the fact that it was composed mainly of immigrants, then it could still be assumed that through time and patient socialist propaganda it would start to play an independent, possibly revolutionary, role. In such a situation patient educational work would not differ much from similar work elsewhere. However, Israeli society is not merely a society of immigrants; it is one of settlers. This society, including its working class, was shaped through a process of colonization. This process, which has been going on for 80 years, was not carried out in a vacuum but in a country populated by another people. The permanent conflict between the settlers' society and the indigenous, displaced Palestinian Arabs has never stopped and it has shaped the very structure of Israeli sociology, politics and economics. The second generation of Israeli leaders is fully aware of this. In a famous speech at the burial of Roy Rubberg, a kibbutz member killed by Palestinian guerrillas in 1956, General Dayan declared: 'We are a settler generation, and without the steel helmet and the cannon we cannot plant a tree or build a house. Let us not flinch from the hatred enflaming hundreds of thousands of Arabs around us. Let us not turn our head away lest our hand tremble. It is our generation's destiny, our life's alternative, to be prepared and armed, strong and harsh, lest the sword drop from our fist and our life cease'.<sup>2</sup> This clear evaluation stands in sharp contrast to official Zionist mythology about 'making the desert bloom', and Dayan brought this out by going on to say that the Palestinians had a very good case since 'their fields are cultivated by us in front of their very eyes'.

When Marx made the famous statement that 'a people oppressing another cannot itself be free' he did not mean this merely as a moral judgement. He also meant that in a society whose rulers oppress another people the exploited class which does not actively oppose this oppression inevitably becomes an accomplice in it. Even when this class does not directly gain anything from this oppression it becomes susceptible to the illusion that it shares a common interest with its own rulers in perpetuating this oppression. Such a class tends to trail behind

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<sup>2</sup> Moshe Dayan, in *Deiner*, May 2nd, 1956.

its rulers rather than to challenge their rule. This, furthermore, is even truer when the oppression takes place not in a far-away country, but 'at home', and when national oppression and expropriation form the very conditions for the emergence and existence of the oppressing society. Revolutionary organizations have operated within the Jewish community in Palestine since the 1920's and have accumulated considerable experience from such practical activity; this experience provides clear proof of the dictum that 'a people oppressing another cannot itself be free'. In the context of Israeli society it means that as long as Zionism is politically and ideologically dominant within that society, and forms the accepted framework of politics, there is no chance whatsoever of the Israeli working class becoming a revolutionary class. The experience of 50 years does not contain a single example of Israeli workers being mobilized on material or trade-union issues to challenge the Israeli régime itself; it is impossible to mobilize even a minority of the proletariat in this way. On the contrary, Israeli workers nearly always put their national loyalties before their class loyalties. Although this may change in the future, this does not remove the need for us to analyse why it has been so for the last fifty years.

### Ethnic Diversity

A third crucial factor is the ethnic character of the Israeli proletariat. The majority of the most exploited strata within the Israeli working class are immigrants from Asia and Africa.<sup>3</sup> At first sight it might appear as if the reduplication of class divisions by ethnic divisions might sharpen internal class conflicts within Israeli society. There has been a certain tendency in this direction. Yet the ethnic factor has worked mainly in the opposite direction over the past 20 years. There are a number of reasons for this. First, many of the immigrants from Asia and Africa improved their standard of living by becoming proletarians in a modern capitalist society. Their discontent was not directed against their condition as proletarians but against their condition as 'orientals', i.e. against the fact that they were looked down upon, and sometimes even discriminated against, by those of European origin. The Zionist rulers have taken measures to try to fuse the two groups together. But, in spite of these, the differences remained clear: in the mid-sixties, two-thirds of those doing unskilled work were orientals; 38 per cent of orientals lived three or more people to a room, whereas only 7 per cent of those from Europe did so; and in the Knesset only 16 of the 120 members were orientals before 1965 and only 21 after it. However, such social differences are interpreted by the orientals in ethnic terms; they do not say, 'I am exploited and discriminated against because I am a worker', but 'I am exploited and discriminated against because I am an oriental'. Secondly, in the present context of colonial Israeli society the oriental workers are a group whose equivalent would be the 'poor whites' of the USA or the Algerian *pid noirs*. Such groups resent being identified with Arabs,

<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of those who immigrated before 1948 were of European origin; between 1948 and 1951 the proportions were about equal; and since then the majority of immigrants have come from outside Europe. By 1966 only half of the Israeli population were of European origins.

blacks and natives of any kind, who are considered as 'inferior' by these settlers. Their response is to side with the most chauvinist, racist and discriminatory elements in the establishment; most supporters of the semi-fascist *Herut* party are Jewish immigrants from Asia and Africa, and this must be borne in mind by those whose revolutionary strategy for Israeli society is based upon a future alliance of Arab Palestinians and oriental Jews, whether on the basis of their common exploited condition or on the basis of a putative cultural affinity they might have as a result of the oriental Jews having come from Arab countries. This does not mean that these strata of the Israeli proletariat are reactionary by 'their very nature'; their present reactionary character is merely a product of rule by political Zionism. These strata could become the agents of socially revolutionary processes in Israeli society if the Zionist establishment itself has been shattered. It is doubtful, however, whether they will spearhead the movement to shatter it.

### A Privileged Society: Capital Inflow

Israeli society is not only a settlers' society shaped by a process of colonizing an already populated country, it is also a society which benefits from unique privileges. It enjoys an influx of material resources from the outside of unparalleled quantity and quality; indeed it has been calculated that in 1968 Israel received 10 per cent of all aid given to underdeveloped countries.<sup>4</sup> *Israel is a unique case in the Middle East; it is financed by imperialism without being economically exploited by it.* This has always been the case in the past: imperialism used Israel for its political purposes and paid for this by economic support. Oscar Gass, an American economist who at one time acted as an economic adviser to the Israeli government, recently wrote:<sup>5</sup>

'What is unique in this development process . . . is the factor of capital inflow. . . . During the 17 years 1949-65 Israel received \$6 billion more of imports of goods and services than she exported. For the 21 years 1948-68, the import surplus would be in excess of 7½ billion dollars. This means an excess of some \$2650 per person during the 21 years for every person who lived in Israel (within the pre-June 1967 borders) at the end of 1968. And of this supply from abroad . . . only about 30 per cent came to Israel under conditions which call for a return outflow of dividends, interest or capital. This is a circumstance without parallel elsewhere, and it severely limits the significance of Israel's economic development as an example to other countries.'

Seventy per cent of this \$6 billion deficit was covered by 'net unilateral capital transfers', which were not subject to conditions governing returns on capital or payment of dividends. They consisted of donations raised by the United Jewish Appeal, reparations from the German government and grants by the US government. Thirty per cent came from 'long-term capital transfers'—Israeli government bonds, loans by foreign governments, and capitalist investment. The latter benefits in Israel from tax exemptions and guaranteed profits by virtue of a

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<sup>4</sup> *Le Monde*, July 2nd, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal of Economic Literature*, December 1969, p. 1177.

'Law for the Encouragement of Capital Investments';<sup>6</sup> nevertheless, this quasi-capitalist source of investment came far behind the unilateral donations and long-term loans. In the entire period from 1949 to 1965, capital transfers (both forms taken together) came from the following sources: 60 per cent from world Jewry, 28 per cent from the German government and 12 per cent from the US government. Of the 'unilateral capital transfers', 51.5 per cent came from world Jewry, 41 per cent from the German government, and 7.4 per cent from the US government. Of the 'long-term capital transfers', 68.7 per cent came from world Jewry, 20.5 per cent from the US government and 11 per cent from other sources. During the 1949-65 period the net saving of the Israeli economy averaged zero, being sometimes +1 per cent and sometimes -1 per cent. Yet the rate of investment over the same period was around 20 per cent of the GNP. This could not have come from within because there was no internal saving within the Israeli economy; it came entirely from abroad in the form of unilateral and long-term capital investments. In other words the growth of the Israeli economy was based entirely on the inflow of capital from outside.<sup>7</sup>

Since 1967 this dependence on foreign capital has increased. As a result of the changed Middle Eastern situation, military expenditure has risen. According to the Israeli Minister of the Treasury, in January 1970 military expenditure was estimated as 24 per cent of GNP for 1970, which was twice the US ratio in 1966, three times the British ratio and four times that of France.<sup>8</sup> This has placed an additional strain both on internal sources of investment money and on the balance of payments, and has had to be met by a commensurate rise in capital inflow. In 1967-68 three 'millionaires' conferences were called in Israel; foreign capitalists were invited to join in increasing the inflow of capital and foreign participation in industrial and agricultural projects. In September 1970, the Israeli Minister of the Treasury, Pinhas Sapir, returned from a three-week money-raising tour in the USA and summed up the situation at that time: 'We set ourselves the aim of raising \$1,000 million from world Jewry in the coming year, by means of the United Jewish Appeal and the Israel Development Bonds campaign sponsored by the Jewish Agency. This sum is \$400 million higher than that raised in the record year of 1967 . . . During the recent visit to Israel of the us financial research team we explained to them that even if we succeed in raising all that we expect from the United Jewish Appeal and the Israel Development Bonds campaign we shall still be millions of dollars short of our requirements. After summing-up our requirements in arms we informed the us that we shall need \$400-500 million per year.'<sup>9</sup> It thus appears that the dependence of Israel on the us has changed significantly since the 1967 war. Fund raising among Jews all over the world (by cashing in on their sentiments and fears) no longer suffices

<sup>6</sup> This law was passed in 1959.

<sup>7</sup> These figures are taken from *The Economic Development of Israel*, by N. Halevi and R. Klinov-Malul, published by the Bank of Israel and Frederick A. Praeger, 1968. The category 'other sources', included under 'long-term capital transfers', has been omitted from the figures for both long-term and unilateral transfers taken together.

<sup>8</sup> Professor D. Patinkin in *Ma'ariv*, January 30th, 1970.

<sup>9</sup> *Yediot Aharanot*, September 30th, 1970. Out of a total of \$1034 million US military aid to foreign countries excluding Vietnam during 1970, Israel received \$500 million.

to support the enormously increased military budget. The rough average of \$500 million from fund raising has now to be doubled, and on top of this the us government has been asked to provide directly an additional \$500 million. It is obvious that the readiness of the us government to forward these sums depends on what it gets in return. In the particular case of Israel this return is not economic profit.<sup>10</sup>

British capital has also been developing close ties with Israel.<sup>11</sup> Twenty per cent of Israel's imports come from Britain, and trade has nearly doubled since the June war. British Leyland participate with the Hista-druth (who have a 34 per cent holding) in bus production, and with private Israeli capital in car and jeep production. Marks and Spencers buy £2-3 million a year of goods from Israel, one-third being textiles and the rest oranges, vegetables and fruit juices. British financial interests, led by Sir Isaac Wolfson and Charles Clore, are also major participants. Wolfson is the chairman of Great Universal Stores in Britain, which has a 30 per cent share of GUS Industries (Israel). Wolfson and Clore co-operate with Israel's largest domestic capitalist group, the Mayer brothers, in real estate in Israel and Africa, and built the only skyscraper in the country, the Shalom tower in Tel Aviv. Wolfson also controls 30 per cent of the major petroleum chain, Paz, which was sold off by Shell under Arab pressure in 1959. Wolfson is also one of the backers of the Israel Corporation, a \$30 million company with a minimum subscription of \$100,000, which was set up after the June war to finance industrial development in Israel.

The increased participation of foreign capital in Israel has led to certain changes within the economy itself, which have also been carried out under the increased pressures set off directly by the level of military expenditure. The economy has been made more 'efficient' by American capitalist standards: taxes have been reformed, investment conditions 'liberalized', and army generals sent to us business schools and then put in charge of industrial enterprises. In the period 1968-69 there was a compulsory wage freeze, and some public enterprises were even sold off to private capital—for instance, the 26 per cent State share in the Haifa oil refinery.

This influx of resources from abroad does not include the property which the Zionist establishment in Israel took over from refugee Palestinians as 'abandoned property'. This includes land, both cultivated and uncultivated; only 10 per cent of the land held by Zionist bodies in pre-1967 Israel had been bought before 1948. It also includes many houses, and complete deserted cities like Jaffa, Lydda and Ramleh, where much property was confiscated after the 1948 war.

### The Distribution of Foreign Funds

The enormous influx of capital did not come into the hands of the small

<sup>10</sup> Early in December 1970 Sapir presented the budget for the period 1970-71; 40 per cent was devoted to military purposes. This included: the purchase of arms, partly covered by the \$500 million promised by Nixon; the development of the arms industry and of military research; and the everyday costs of national security operations.

<sup>11</sup> See 'Why this nation ~~does~~ buy British', *The Times*, March 28th, 1969.

Israeli bourgeoisie, but into the hands of the State, of the Zionist establishment,<sup>12</sup> and this establishment has been under the control of the bureaucracies of the Labour parties since the 1920's. This has determined the way in which all inflowing capital, as well as conquered property, have been put to use. Funds collected abroad are channelled through the Jewish Agency which, with the Histadrut and the Government, forms part of the triangle of governing institutions. All the Zionist parties, from Mapam to Herut, are represented in the Jewish Agency. It finances sections of the Israeli economy, in particular the non-profitable parts of agriculture like the kibbutzim, and it also distributes funds to the Zionist parties, enabling them to run their newspapers and economic enterprises. The funds are divided according to the votes cast for the parties at the previous election, and this system of subsidies enables the Zionist parties to survive long after the social forces that created them have disappeared.<sup>13</sup>

Historically the purpose of this system was the strengthening of the colonization process, in accordance with the ideas of the Zionist Labour parties, and the strengthening of the grip which the bureaucracy itself had over Israeli society. This has proved successful, since not only is the Israeli working class organizationally and economically under the complete control of the Labour bureaucracy but so too is the Israeli bourgeoisie. Historically the bureaucracy has shaped most of the institutions, values and practices of Israeli society without any successful opposition from within, and subject only to the external constraints imposed by imperialism and the resistance of the Arabs. Most of this enormous inflow of resources went into immigration projects and the housing and employment necessary to cope with the inflow that raised the Jewish population from 0.6 million in 1948 to 2.4 million in 1968.

This process was accompanied by relatively little personal corruption, but by a lot of political and social corruption. The influx of resources had a decisive effect on the dynamics of Israeli society, for the Israeli working class shared, directly and indirectly, in this transfusion of capital. Israel is not a country where foreign aid flows entirely into private pockets; it is a country where this aid subsidises the whole of society. The Jewish worker in Israel does not get his share in cash, but he gets it in terms of new and relatively inexpensive housing, which could not have been constructed by raising capital locally; he gets it in industrial employment which could not have been started or kept going without external subsidies; and he gets it in terms of a general standard of living which does not correspond to the output of that society. The same obviously applies to the profits of the Israeli bourgeoisie whose economic activity and profit-making is regulated by the bureaucracy through subsidies, import licences and tax exemptions. In this way the struggle between the Israeli working class and its

<sup>12</sup> The term 'Zionist establishment' is that conventionally used in Israel to denote the ruling group present in the interlocking set of Zionist institutions.

<sup>13</sup> In January 1970 there were ten daily Hebrew papers in Israel, of whom seven were subsidized party papers; these included the Labour papers *Demor* and *Lamorbav*, and the MAPAM paper *al-Hamishmar*. The three private papers were *Ma'ariv* and *Yedioth Aharnot*, both evening papers with expansionist policies, and *Ha'aretz*, a more liberal morning paper run by Gershom Shoken. Military censorship operates in Israel.



employers, both bureaucrats and capitalists, is fought not only over the surplus value produced by the worker, but also over the share each group receives from this external source of subsidies.

### Israel and Imperialism

What political circumstances enabled Israel to receive external aid in such quantities and under such unparalleled conditions? This question was answered as early as 1951 by the editor of the daily paper, *Ha'arets*. 'Israel has been given a role not unlike that of a watchdog. One need no fear that it will exercise an aggressive policy towards the Arab states if this will contradict the interests of the USA and Britain. But should the West prefer for one reason or another to close its eyes one can rely on Israel to punish severely those of the neighbouring states whose lack of manners towards the West has exceeded the proper limits.'<sup>14</sup> This evaluation of Israel's role in the Middle East has been verified many times, and it is clear that Israel's foreign and military policies cannot be deduced from the dynamics of the internal social conflicts alone. The entire Israeli economy is founded on the special political and military role which Zionism, and the settlers' society, fulfil in the Middle East as a whole. If Israel is viewed in isolation from the rest of the Middle East there is no explanation for the fact that 70 per cent of the capital inflow is not intended for economic gain and is not subject to considerations of profitability. But the problem is immediately solved when Israel is considered as a component of the Middle East. The fact that a considerable part of this money comes from donations raised by Zionists among Jews all over the world does not alter its being a subsidy by imperialism. What matters is rather the fact that the US Treasury is willing to consider these funds, raised in the US for transferring to another country, as 'charity donations' qualifying for income-tax exemptions. These donations depend on the goodwill of the US Treasury and it is only reasonable to assume that this goodwill would not continue were Israel to conduct a principled anti-imperialist policy.

This means that although class conflicts do exist in Israeli society they are constrained by the fact that the society as a whole is subsidised from the outside. This privileged status is related to Israel's role in the region, and as long as this role continues there is little prospect of the internal social conflicts acquiring a revolutionary character. On the other hand, a revolutionary breakthrough in the Arab world would change this situation. By releasing the activity of the masses throughout the Arab world it could change the balance of power; this would make Israel's traditional politico-military role obsolete, and would thus reduce its usefulness for imperialism. At first Israel would probably be used in an attempt to crush such a revolutionary breakthrough in the Arab world; yet once this attempt had failed Israel's politico-military role *vis-à-vis* the Arab world would be finished. Once this role and its associated privileges had been ended, the Zionist régime, depending as it does on these privileges, would be open to mass challenge from within Israel itself.

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<sup>14</sup> Shoken in *Ha'arets*, 'The prostitute of the sea ports and ourselves. Meditations on the eve of new year', September 30th, 1951.

This does not mean that there is nothing for revolutionaries inside Israel to do, except sit and wait for the emergence of objective external conditions on which they have no influence. It only means that they must base their activity on a strategy that acknowledges the unique features of Israeli society, rather than on one that reproduces the generalizations of analysis of classic capitalism. The main task for revolutionaries who accept this assessment is to direct their work towards those strata of the Israeli population who are immediately affected by the political results of Zionism and who have to pay for it. These strata include Israeli youth, who are called on to wage 'an eternal war imposed by destiny', and the Palestinian Arabs who live under Israeli rule.<sup>15</sup> These strata share an anti-Zionist tendency which makes them potential allies in the revolutionary struggle inside Israel and the revolutionary struggle throughout the Middle East. Anyone who follows closely the revolutionary struggles within the Arab world becomes aware of the dialectical relationship between the struggle against Zionism within Israel and the struggle for social revolution within the Arab world. Such a strategy does not imply that activity within the Israeli working class should be neglected; it only implies that this activity too must be subordinated to the general strategy of the struggle against Zionism.

### Israel's Role in Africa and Asia

Israel's primary relationship with imperialism is as a watchdog in the Middle East, funded and privileged for serving this purpose. But it has a secondary relationship, that of serving as a channel through which money and ideology can be routed to neo-colonial countries in Asia and Africa. It is obviously in Israel's own interest to build economic and political ties with non-Arab Afro-Asian states and to strengthen pro-Israeli influence there; and at the same time us imperialism often finds it more convenient to funnel its aid through the 'third country' technique, rather than to expose itself by organizing the aid directly. This project is realized in three different ways: '1. highly trained Israeli "experts" are placed at the disposal of African states, often in strategically important positions; 2. various categories of African personnel, including students, civil servants, labour leaders, and military cadres are given specialized training in Israel itself; this training is usually provided quickly and efficiently; and 3. Israeli businessmen and their government have set up joint economic enterprises with African states and private business.'<sup>16</sup>

Since the 1950's Israel's aid programme to Africa has been growing, serving as it grows both Israel's specific interests and the broader interests of world imperialism. Different sections of the Israeli state were mobilized to implement this policy, two of which were the trade union organization, Histadrut, and the army, Tsahal. The specific nature of the Histadrut, being both boss and domestic trade-union at the same time, facilitates Israeli penetration into the third world, where

<sup>15</sup> The opposition movement in Israel, particularly among high-school students, was discussed in Akiva Orr's 'Israel: Opposition Grows', *Black Dwarf*, June 12th, 1970.

<sup>16</sup> 'Israel: Imperialist Mission in Africa,' *Tricontinental* 15.

one often finds a governmental one-party, one-union structure. This penetration takes place as a function of Israel's own interests and to further a collusion of interests between Israel and imperialism. 'It is possible that the Israeli model will serve as a "Third economic force" Israel is an alternative differing from the Western model, but certainly more adapted to the interests of the free world than is the communist model,' wrote the United States journal *Foreign Affairs*, in 1959. The author of the article, Mr Arnold Rivkin, was director of the 'Africa Research Project' at the 'Centre for International Studies' organized by the CIA at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Later, in a book published in 1961, Rivkin is more precise about the role Israel plays in Western penetration in Africa: 'Israel's role as a Third force could also be reinforced by imaginative use of the Third Country Technique. A Free World state wishing to enlarge its assistance flow to Africa might channel some part of it through Israel because of Israel's special qualifications and demonstrated acceptability to many African nations.'<sup>17</sup>

Little is known in Israel about this aspect of the Histadrut's activity, and it prefers to make publicity for its Afro-Asian Institute. The Head of the Political Department of the Histadrut (the Histadrut's 'Foreign Minister' who works in close collaboration with the real Minister) recently summarized the activities of the Afro-Asian Institute: 'The Institute, which was created by the Histadrut in 1960 . . . is an important link in its international activity especially in the under-developed countries of Africa and Asia. But its activity and its world-wide renown contribute to reinforcing the Histadrut's links with other countries and organisations. To date, the Institute has trained 1,848 delegates from trade-unions and co-operatives, from Institutes of Further Education, as well as high officials from 85 African, Asian and Latin American countries . . . The Institute has been called upon to organize seminars in various African and Asian countries . . . It was former students of the Institute, now occupying high positions in their respective countries and organizations, who took the initiative for such seminars. Up to the present the Institute has organized such seminars in the following countries; Nigeria (twice), Dahomey, Togo, The Ivory Coast, Liberia, Singapore, Korea, (twice), Ceylon, India and Nepal. About 500 people participated in these activities. Next month three short seminars will be organized for the militants from Cypriot trade-union organizations, and the 1970 programme includes the following countries. Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Singapore Hong-Kong, Korea . . . others will follow.'<sup>18</sup>

George Meany, President of the *AFL-CIO*, which finances the Afro-Asian Institute, clearly stated: 'The Histadrut is a national centre which has worked for the cause of democracy and liberty in the free world, particularly in Asia and Africa, through the intermediary of its Afro-Asian Institute.'<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Africa and the West*, Praeger 1961.

<sup>18</sup> Histadrut, *International Supplement*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

Israel's directly military assistance to African states began in 1960 and includes both general assistance to neo-colonial governments and aid to forces on the southern periphery of the Arab world who might further imperialist interests. The latter category has included the provision of military advisers to the Chad government's anti-guerrilla campaign, and aid to the guerrilla movement in the Southern Sudan. Israel has also given military assistance to Ethiopia's campaign against the Eritrean liberation movement. In other countries, including Tanzania and the Congo, Israel has trained airforce, navy and army personnel and has supplied arms and advice for the establishment of paramilitary agricultural settlements modelled on pioneering settlements in Israel itself. Many of these projects have been carried out in co-operation with us foreign aid programmes or with funds funnelled through Israel from the us.<sup>20</sup>

In Asia Israel has been less successful in carrying out such a programme, with the notable exception of Singapore where she is helping to sustain Britain's East of Suez strategy. Since 1966 Israeli experts, originally described as 'Mexican agricultural experts', have been training the Singapore army, and have supplied it with tanks and electronic equipment.<sup>21</sup>

### Which is the Ruling Class ?

The subordination of the entire economy to political considerations has characterized Zionist colonization from the very beginning, and is the key to decoding the unique nature of the Israeli ruling class. Zionist colonization did not proceed as an ordinary, capitalist, colonizatory process motivated by considerations of profitability. The bourgeois elements in this colonization always preferred to employ Arab labour, but the Zionist Labour bureaucracy struggled against this and demanded a policy of 'Jewish labour only'. It was a bitter struggle that was waged throughout the 1920's and 1930's and formed the main conflict within the Zionist community in Palestine. It was finally won by the Labour bureaucracy, to a considerable extent due to the support it received from the world Zionist movement. That support was based on political considerations, for the aim of political Zionism was, from the very beginning, to establish a purely Jewish nation-state in Palestine and to displace the indigenous population. As early as June 1895 Theodor Herzl wrote in his diary: "The private lands in the territories granted us we must gradually take out of the hands of the owners. The poorer amongst the population we try to transfer quietly outside our borders by providing them with work in the transit countries, but in our country we deny them all work. Those with property will join us. The transfer of land and the displacement of the poor must be done gently and carefully. Let the landowners believe they are exploiting us by getting overvalued prices. But no lands shall be sold back to their owners."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Full details of Israel's military aid to Africa in *Tricontinental* 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Der Spiegel*, November 3rd, 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Herzl, *Selected Works*, Newman Edition, Tel-Aviv, Volume 7, Book I, p. 86.

It was this consideration embodied by the world Zionist movement that tipped the scales in favour of the Zionist Labour bureaucracy in Palestine and its policy of 'Jewish labour only'. The defeat of the bourgeois elements established a pattern of joint rule in which the Labour bureaucracy played the senior role and the bourgeoisie the junior one combining to form a new embryonic ruling class. This specific combination within the ruling establishment has remained unchanged from the 1940's to this day and constitutes a unique feature of Israeli society. If the dominant ideology in any given society is the ideology of the dominant class, then if the identity of the dominant class is rather blurred one can try to analyse the dominant ideology itself and deduce from it the identity of the ruling class. In Israel the dominant ideology was never a capitalist one; it was a blend of bourgeois elements combined with dominant themes and ideas typical of the Zionist Labour movement, ideas derived from the socialist movement in Eastern Europe but transformed to express the aims of political Zionism.

This balance between the different sections of the ruling class is not static, and recently the balance has been shifting in favour of the bourgeois partner. One of the symptoms of this is the division between Mrs Meir and Ben-Gurion on the one hand and their disciple Dayan on the other. The issue was the old one of whether to employ Palestinian from the occupied territories for work within the Israeli economy. Mr Meir was strongly opposed to this policy, whereas Dayan supported it and the bourgeois paper *Ha'aretz* supported Dayan. But whatever the different tendencies at any one moment the Labour bureaucracy still dominates through its three centres: Government, Jewish Agency and Histadrut. Wielding the tremendous apparatus of the state and the unions it dominates Israeli society and most of the economy. In 1960 the privately owned sector produced only 38.5 per cent of the total net product of the Israeli economy,<sup>23</sup> and it is doubtful if this proportion has changed much in the subsequent decade.

But the economic power of the Zionist Labour bureaucracy is far greater than this figure suggests. Apart from its direct control of the state and the Histadrut it has indirect bureaucratic control over the private sector. This control goes far beyond the ordinary intervention of the state in the economy of the kind that occurs in most capitalist countries. The entire Israeli economy, including the private sector, depends on subsidies from abroad which flow mostly through state controlled channels. By controlling the flow of subsidies through the policies of the Treasury and the Jewish Agency, the Labour bureaucracy directs and regulates this flow. This also gives it a useful grip on its capitalist partner. Israel is a unique form of capitalism, ruled by a unique class partnership. The control of the bureaucracy over the flow of funds from abroad enables it to exercise a far-reaching control over the broad masses of the population, not only in political and economic matters, but even in aspects of everyday life. The majority of the Israeli population depend directly, and daily, on the goodwill of the bureaucracy for their jobs, housing and health insurance. Some of the

<sup>23</sup> Falk Institute Report, 1961-63. The remainder was owned in approximately equal proportions by the State and by the Histadrut.

workers who have rebelled against the bureaucracy, like the seamen in the great strike of December 1951, were denied employment, and some who refused to surrender were forced in the end to emigrate. At the same time there is no national health service in Israel, only that of the Histadrut, so those who refuse to join or who fight it are deprived of health insurance. Indeed the key to the hold of the bureaucracy over the proletariat is the trade union federation, the Histadrut.

### The Histadrut: National Interest Before Class Interest

Israeli workers might seem to be in an enviable situation, since the Trade Union Federation, known simply as the 'Federation' (Histadrut) gives the impression of being an advanced and powerful workers' union. From a certain viewpoint the Histadrut and its facilities are indeed quite exceptional: it has 1.1 million members out of a total population of nearly 3 millions; a quarter of Israeli wage-earners work in concerns belonging to the Histadrut; and the Histadrut has for years accounted for around 22-25 per cent of the Israeli Net National Product.

The Histadrut was founded in 1920 during a General Congress of Jewish workers and until 1966 it was known as the 'General Confederation of Hebrew workers in the land of Israel'. The number of Jewish workers in Palestine in 1920 was some 5,000, while there were around 50,000 Arab workers, according to the estimate of a Zionist historian.<sup>24</sup>

The founders of this 'General' Federation, who were all inspired by Zionist ideology, and most of whom were members of Jewish petty-bourgeois parties, limited membership of the Histadrut exclusively to Jews, and to Jews 'living on the fruits of their labour'—workers, artisans, tradesmen, and self-employed workers. When the basic principles of the Histadrut were being laid down, the founders made it clear that 'national interest' took priority over 'economic interest' and 'cultural interests'. The internationalist approach to the class nature of society was never brought up at the Histadrut's founding congress, not even by a minority group. A year after its foundation, the Histadrut created its first enterprises. These were a large company dealing with Public Works—'Solel Boneh'—and the 'Workers' Bank', the latter in association with the World Zionist Organization. 'Solel Boneh' has been engaged on a variety of construction work over the past few years, in several parts of the world; for example, it has built luxury hotels in certain African countries, and has constructed roads and various military installations in several Asian countries, including US air bases in Turkey). The fact that from the start, the Histadrut made Zionist interests its primary concern, at the expense of its trade-union role, has led to an extremely hierarchized organizational structure. A bureaucratic machinery was set up such that the entire organization of the trade-union was subordinated to the management and to the political 'bosses'—who were always from Zionist parties. There has never been

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<sup>24</sup> *The Arabs in Palestine* (in Hebrew), by Joseph Waznitz, p. 151.

the least trade-union independence in the Histadrut.<sup>25</sup>

The Histadrut was not merely concerned with its role of maintaining Jews in national isolation while they were living in an essentially Arab milieu. Since its creation it has been at the spearhead of Zionist colonisation in Palestine. Its choice position amongst the country's Zionist colonizers, and its extremely strong organization, made it a pioneer in the process of agricultural colonization and in winning places of work for Jewish workers, by evicting Arab peasants and workers. The Zionist slogans of the 20's and 30's—'the conquest of work' and 'the conquest of the soil'—found their principal realizers in the Histadrut. Its leader, Berl Katznelson explained: 'Our Histadrut is unique among trade-unions, for it is a union which both plans and executes. This is not due to our wisdom or perspicacity. This was always our vision, in all our actions. From the moment that the young immigrant reaches the shores of Palestine and looks for work in the plantations, he finds himself up against hard reality, and, at the same time, in our world of vision.'<sup>26</sup> More recently, the then General Secretary of the Histadrut, Pinhas Lavon, summed up the historical role of the Federation: 'The General Federation of Workers was founded forty years ago by several thousand young people wanting to work in an under-developed country where labour was cheap, a country which rejected its inhabitants and which was inhospitable to newcomers. Under these conditions, the foundation of the Histadrut was a central event in the process of the rebirth of the Hebrew people in its father-land. Our Histadrut is a general organization to its core. It is not a workers' trade union, although it copes perfectly well with the real needs of the worker.'<sup>27</sup> Being 'general to its core', the Histadrut has effectively become the central force of the Jewish community in its many aspects. It organized the Zionist armed forces, sometimes in collusion with the British occupation, and sometimes secretly against its wishes; it created a system of social security, the only one in existence in Israel, which has become an important weapon in the domination of the Jewish masses and the organization of the workers under the authority of the Histadrut; it has opened recruitment offices everywhere, thus reinforcing its domination, whilst at the same time regulating the right to work; it possesses its own school network, its own promotion societies, and its own production and service co-operatives; as an organization it completely dominates all the kibbutzim and collective farms of the whole country. It is not for nothing that the Histadrut was considered as the central pillar of the Zionist enterprise from its beginning, or as the Zionists say 'the State in embryo'.

The Histadrut leadership decided the political line of the Jewish

<sup>25</sup> Union dues are collected by special collection offices which the Histadrut has set up throughout Israel, and local branches receive their funds from the centre, not from their local membership. This severely limits their independence. The Histadrut employs a permanent staff of 30,000 and its bureaucracy has a very tight hold on its members; indeed the Histadrut building in Tel-Aviv is known as 'the Kremlin'.

<sup>26</sup> International Supplement on the Jubilee of the Histadrut, 1920-70.

<sup>27</sup> *Moad*, published by the department of culture and education of the Histadrut (in Hebrew), 1960, p. 3.

community, both in matters of 'Jewish interest' and in its relations with the British occupiers and the Arab masses. The political leaders of the State of Israel—David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir—have all come from the ranks of the Histadrut.

It was only at the end of the period of the British mandate, in 1943, that the Histadrut created a special department for Arab labourers; its aim was to organize them within a paternalistic and puppet framework, so as to divert them from the political struggle—i.e. from the anti-Imperialist and anti-Zionist struggle. The experiment was summed up at the time by a Zionist historian—a specialist in Arab questions and a Histadrut member: 'As a national feeling develops among the workers (Arabs) their opposition to those who want to organize them from the outside is becoming stronger. The most intelligent and dynamic among them never have an opportunity to show their talent and initiative. A pamphlet in Arabic (published by the Histadrut) explains that one should only be concerned with the economic interests of the Arab workers, and that one should exclude all political activity. This condition is difficult for people who are aware and close to public life to accept. The conception of work and the conquest of work held by the majority of the Histadrut is equally an obstacle, since it is difficult to explain things convincingly to an Arab worker. The discrimination in salaries between Jewish workers and Arab workers exasperates the Arabs, particularly since work conditions and price-levels tend to be equal. In these circumstances it was easy for Arab organizations to send us their members to ask 'naive questions' at the time of the May Day demonstration—"Is proletarian solidarity compatible with a call for the conquest of labour, and for the creation of the Jewish State?"<sup>28</sup> No Zionist has ever been able to answer that question; they cannot answer it today, any more than they could yesterday.

### A Crisis of Confidence in the Histadrut

With the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the integration of the Histadrut into the ruling Zionist system became more evident. The economic sector of the Histadrut, with its business concerns and its immense wealth, forms part of the public sector, whose development had to accelerate with the arrival of new immigrants, at the same time as capital was flowing into the new State. The Histadrut made it possible to form a nationalized economy. The theory propagated for years by Histadrut leaders, according to which the economic sector of the Histadrut constitutes the basis for the construction of socialism, collapsed with independence. Another often-stated argument, that the economic sector of the Histadrut belongs to the workers, was also invalidated. The Minister of Agriculture, Haim Gvati, who is one of the principal leaders of the Histadrut, had to admit during the Histadrut conference in 1964: 'We have not succeeded in transforming this immense richness into socialist economic cells. We have not succeeded in maintaining the working-class nature of our economic sector. Actually there are no characteristics to differentiate it from the rest of the public sector, and sometimes even from the private sector. The

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<sup>28</sup> *The Arabs in Palestine*, p. 173.



atmosphere, work-relations and human relations of our economic sector are in no way different from any other industrial enterprise."<sup>29</sup>

A complement and illustration to these remarks is to be found in the attitude of the Israeli workers towards the Histadrut. Among all the evidence on this point it is most interesting to quote some from the Histadrut itself, published in its 1966 Year Book. 'A very considerable number of workers hardly notice the Histadrut's trade-union activities, and they consider that their situation would not have been modified if there had been no trade union.' According to an enquiry undertaken for the Histadrut, the results of which are in the Year Book, a growing number of workers believe that the local trade-union branches in their places of work (called 'workers' committees' in Israel) should be independent of the Histadrut. 20 per cent of all wage-earners indicated that strikes have broken out in their enterprises against the advice of the Histadrut; 47 per cent thought that in certain cases it was desirable for the workers to embark on a strike without Histadrut authorization. The Year Book continues: 'The conclusions of the enquiry into the action committees are even more serious' (These are committees formed against the authorization of the Histadrut and aimed at, or on the occasion of, wild-cat strikes or wild-cat action.) 'Against 8 per cent of wage-earners who stated that strikes which had broken out were contrary to the advice of the local trade-union branch, 29 per cent were of the opinion that such strikes are justified in certain cases. *In short, the tendency to break with the established order is getting stronger, in so far as work relations go . . .*' (Our italics). The same publication shows that a majority of Histadrut members consider that the trade-union conference has no influence on the functioning of the central body. Among the minority who do believe that ordinary members can exercise some influence, there is still a major number who estimate this influence to be insufficient. In reply to the question 'Why are you a member of the Histadrut?' the official source says that about 70 per cent replied that it was an 'automatic thing', or 'because they made us' or 'because it was the done thing' or 'because of the social security'. A minority (16 per cent) stated that they belonged for ideological reasons, whereas 15 per cent said they were members because the Histadrut defended the interest of the workers.

The Year Book concludes that 'a majority of Histadrut members i.e. 55 per cent, joined of their own free-will, a third (24 per cent) joined automatically on immigrating to Israel, and a fifth (20 per cent) found they had become members automatically because they had been registered as such in their employment.' Histadrut leaders, industrial circles and government members are now openly expressing their concern at what they call the workers' 'crisis of confidence' towards the Histadrut. This crisis is getting worse from year to year. It is, in fact, the reason for the change in the Histadrut top leadership in 1969.

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<sup>29</sup> The secretary-general of Histadrut Enterprises, the industrial wing that controls 25 per cent of the economy, told a group of Zionist businessmen in Los Angeles in early 1969 that Histadrut Enterprises was no different from any other capitalist organization, despite its trade union links; it was expected to make a profit and show a decent return on capital just like any private firm (*Sunday Times*, July 27th 1969).

when the former Secretary General, Aharon Becker, was replaced by Itzhak Ben-Aharon, known for his vigorous rhetorical style and the working-class phraseology he customarily uses. The former Secretary General, and the new one, are both members of the ruling Labour party.

### Wild-Cat Strikes and Action Committees

Certain important strikes have occurred in the short history of the workers' struggle in Israel. The first took place in 1951, relatively soon after the creation of the State of Israel, with the famous seamen's strike; next came a series of wild-cat strikes in 1962, after the devaluation of the Israeli pound; the third wave took place in 1969, with the postal workers' and the Ashdod port workers' strike.

The seamen's strike was the most violent in the history of strikes in Israel. The battlefield was the port of Haifa, and Israeli ships there, and in foreign ports. It was special, because it was a strike led by young seamen without a trade-union tradition, and because the conflict was about the means of electing trade-union delegates by the mass of seamen. For those who know the nature of the Histadrut it is not surprising that it immediately mobilized all the forces at its disposition against the strikers. The strike leaders were dragged before an 'internal tribunal' of the Histadrut and mobilized into the Army. Vast police forces engaged in violent battles against the strikers. The 1962 wave of strikes for the first time gave rise extensively to a kind of organization now known as an 'action committee'. The two fronts were once more clearly defined: the Histadrut on one side of the barricade, the workers on the other. It was during this period that the first steps to group the action committees on a national, or at least a regional basis, were taken—but this attempt was not successful. The 1969 strikes were a warning to the government and to the employers that strikes were possible despite the situation of war and of 'national unity'. The postal workers' strike saw the Israeli government once again issue mobilization orders, with the Histadrut's agreement, against the strikers, to force them back to work, as the existing laws allow. The strikers broke State laws and were brought before the courts, but the trial was never concluded. Another factor characterized the Ashdod port-workers' struggle. The Histadrut threatened to bring the local trade-union militants before an 'internal tribunal', but the local militants, with the support of the workers, held their ground. The trial opened in the presence of television cameras and had a wide coverage in the country. The workers were denounced as El-Fatah agents and as 'saboteurs'. The threats of the Histadrut leadership were: 'If you are found guilty the maximum sanctions will be applied, which means you will be excluded from the Histadrut, thus losing all the advantages of social security for you and your families.' The workers continued their struggle and passed from accused to accusers. The Histadrut leadership received bad publicity, and hastened to end the spectacle without pronouncing a verdict.

Strikes in Israel Year	No. of Strikes	Strikers in 1,000s	Strike days in 1,000s
1949	53	5	57
1950	72	9	55
1951	76	10	114
1952	94	14	58
1953	84	9	35
1954	82	12	72
1955	87	10	54
1956	74	11	114
1957	59	4	116
1958	48	6	83
1959	51	6	31
1960	135	14	49
1961	128	27	141
1962	146	38	243
1963	127	87	129
1964	138	48	102
1965	288	90	208
1966	282	87	156
1967	142	25	58
1968	100	42	72

*Sources:* Statistical Year Books, 1965, 1967 and 1968.

Annual Report from the Bank of Israel.

*Notes:* Until 1959, only strikes lasting more than one day were included. Since 1960, strikes lasting more than two hours were also included. The figures also include lock-outs, but these are rare and do not affect the yearly comparisons.

### The Parties of the Zionist Right

If the Histadrut is controlled by the parties of the Zionist left, the other two main centres of power, Government and Jewish Agency, reflect a wider spectrum of Zionist opinion. The electoral system is a proportional one, with each party presenting a nation-wide list at the elections and the 120 seats in the Knesset being allocated accordingly, to parties obtaining over 1 per cent of the votes.

From the 1930's to the 1960's the Zionist right consisted of two parties, the 'General Zionists' and Herut (Freedom). The General Zionists represented Zionist private capital in Palestine—the citrus grove owners, other landowners, and the industrialists. It was a typical capitalist party with the same slogans as in the west, except that it called for limiting Histadrut powers, rather than for turning the economy into a fully private one. Herut was not based on economic interests in the way the General Zionists were, but rather on militant and extremist Zionism. Its mottoes were (from the 1930's onwards): 'Two banks has the Jordan; one is ours, the other is ours too', and 'In blood and fire Judaea fell, in blood and fire Judaea will rise'. They demanded a policy of military conquest, rather than one of colonizatory settlement, which was the policy of the Zionist left. Herut employed fascist tactics in the 1930's, including brown shirts and armed terror, and it draws most of its adherents from the oriental Jews who are attracted by its crude

nationalistic slogans. In the mid-1960's these two parties merged under the leadership of Herut's leader, Begin, and formed the Herut-Liberal Block—'Gahal'. (In Israel 'Liberal' means 'Conservative'.) For the first time in Israeli history Herut was accepted into the cabinet on the eve of the June war to form part of the so-called 'National Unity cabinet'; but they left Mrs Meir's cabinet in August 1970 because of her acceptance of the Rogers plan which called for an Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 cease-fire lines. Like the Zionist left, Gahal receives most of its financial support from the Jewish Agency.

### The Dilemmas of the Zionist Left

From the early 1900's to this very day the backbone of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine has been the Zionist left, and in particular those émigrés who came from Eastern Europe in the years between 1904 and 1914. This left has always been reformist and nationalist, but even as such it has split again and again as a result of the inherent conflicts between its Zionism and its socialism. The conflicts it has experienced can be grouped under three headings:

1. Foreign Policy: What position to adopt on imperialism in the Middle East and elsewhere, and on the socialist movement throughout the world, especially when the struggle against imperialism or co-operation with socialist movements conflicts with Zionist aspirations.
2. Class Struggle: What policy to have towards Jewish employers in Palestine and towards the capitalist sector within Zionism.
3. Socialist Internationalism: Whether to have a joint or separate struggle with the Palestinian peasants and workers against capitalism in Palestine, and whether to support other revolutionary movements.

All those who differed on these issues were still Zionists, i.e. they considered their main goal to be the establishment and maintaining of an exclusively Jewish nation-state and of Jewish immigration from all over the world. Outside the Zionist left there were always a few groups making up the anti-Zionist left; they did not face the political dilemmas outlined here; their differences with each other were on issues of the strategy and tactics of the struggle against Zionism and for socialism in Palestine. They will be examined later. Of the Zionist parties by far the most important is MAPAI (Israeli Labour Party), founded in 1930 through the merger of two smaller parties and the dominant party in all coalition governments in Israel since 1948. Originally the two components of MAPAI agreed that Jewish exclusiveness must take precedence over co-operation with Arab workers and peasants in Palestine. However, they differed on the degree of class collaboration with Zionist employers, and only when agreement was reached did they decide to merge. The policy they agreed on was one of subordinating class interests to Zionist interests within the Jewish community itself, and MAPAI became the main protagonist of the 'Jewish Labour only' policy. This policy meant that Jewish employers were pressured to employ only Jewish workers, and both Arab workers and Jewish employers were terrorized, often by violence, into enforcing this policy.

This was the main internal issue within the Jewish community in the 1930's and it was finally won by MAPAI, thus ensuring its dominant role.

Leaders like Ben-Gurion, Eshkol and Golda Meir have remained dedicated to this policy to this day and are still dominant within Israel. MAPAI has never considered itself Marxist or revolutionary, but socialist and reformist; yet although Mrs Meir spoke in 1950 of 'socialism in our time' the party no longer claims any allegiance to socialism. In all the conflicts between imperialist and anti-imperialist forces in the Middle East this party had consciously collaborated and even plotted secretly (as in the Suez war) with imperialism. It has a clear stake in the continuation of imperialist influence in the area and considers any victory for anti-imperialist forces as a threat to Israel itself.

After 22 years in power certain changes have occurred in the party, the most important of which has been the emergence of a technocracy consisting of army officers who have entered the economy as administrators and specialists;<sup>30</sup> this group is in conflict with the old guard, and represents the growing influence of the army on Israeli politics as a whole, both because of the technical skills it contains and because of the increased weight of the military in the period after the June war. When Ben-Gurion was ousted from power in 1965 many of this group joined him to form RAFI (List of Israel's Workers), but when these technocrats realized that Ben-Gurion could no longer return to power they hastened to rejoin the ruling party. The newly reunited party is now called Ha'avoda (The Labour), and it can be expected that when the old guard disappears over the next few years it will be this new group that will be the dominant force in Israeli politics.

The second largest Zionist left party is MAPAM (United Workers' Party), formed in the late 1940's; its main component is Hashomer Hatz'air (The Young Guard). MAPAM originally considered itself to be both Marxist and revolutionary and proposed a binational state in Palestine; however there had to be a Jewish majority guaranteed by the constitution, and until such a majority was achieved—through immigration—Palestine was to remain under 'international trusteeship'. The idea of a binational state was dropped in 1947 when the UN, and the USSR, accepted the partition of Palestine. MAPAM was always a little to the left of MAPAI on many trade-union issues in Israel, and—at least verbally—in matters of foreign policy as well. But it has always remained loyal to Zionism and this has led it into collaboration with imperialism, as over Suez. In Israeli politics MAPAM always trails, under protest, behind MAPAI but it is the main instrument for defending Zionism against criticism by socialists, Marxists and revolutionaries at home and abroad, and it still plays this role, although somewhat less so since 1967. MAPAM always points to its kibbutzim as a new mode of communal life; but it never mentions that many of them are on lands from which the Arab peasants were driven off, that there is not a single

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<sup>30</sup> See Elie Lobel, 'L'escalade à l'intérieur de la société israélienne,' Partisans No. 52 March/April 1970.

Jewish-Arab kibbutz, and that all are subsidized by Zionist funds.<sup>31</sup> MAPAM talks of the 'right of the Jews to self-determination in Palestine', but by this it does not mean the rights of the Jewish population now living in Israel, but the political rights of world Jewry in Palestine. Like all Zionists MAPAM insists on maintaining the Israeli immigration law which grants automatic immigration rights to Jews while denying them to anyone else. Like all other Zionist parties MAPAM is financed by the Jewish Agency, and this enables it to maintain a party apparatus, daily papers and a publicity network abroad.

The permanent conflict with the Arab world, and with anti-imperialist trends within it, forces Zionism to depend increasingly on imperialism, and this creates a permanent pressure shifting the Zionist left to the right. On its long road from its origins in the Russia of 1905 the Zionist left has one by one shed its slogans of revolution, socialism and anti-imperialism. Each shift to the right leaves behind it a splinter group loyal to the abandoned slogan.

The latest offspring of this kind is SIAH (Israeli New Left). It was formed after the 1967 war by members of MAPAM who were opposed to their party's collaboration with the Dayan-Eshkol-Begin bloc, and their main emphasis is on the lack of a peace initiative in Israeli policy. Yet although they consider themselves Marxists and revolutionaries they pledge allegiance to Zionism. The editor of one of their publications recently stated: 'Our struggle to change the image of Israeli society and to consolidate a peace policy must be based, whatever happens, on principled and consistent affirmation of the state of Israel and of the Zionist principles on which it is founded. Any departure from this will lead SIAH astray from the aims it set itself when it was founded'.<sup>32</sup> At the same time SIAH has been able to attract support from young Israelis hostile to the official line; its second Congress held in Tel Aviv in November 1970 was attended by 350 people—mainly ex-MAPAM and ex-MAKI—and passed resolutions calling for peace without annexations of Arab territory, recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, unconditional talks with the Arabs and Palestinians, and Israeli acceptance of the Jarring mission.

### The Non-Zionist Left

Outside the Zionist camp there exist two forces: the Israeli Communist Party—RAKAH—and the Matzpen group. The Israeli CP was founded in the late 1920's and was, almost from the beginning, a Stalinist party. It has remained so to this day. In its history the party has undergone many splits, most of them over the question of what policy to adopt towards Arab nationalism; and in general the party has always followed the foreign policy of the USSR. The most recent of the many absurd positions which such a policy leads to is the support of the party for the US Rogers peace plan. The aim of this plan is to stabilize the political set-

<sup>31</sup> The kibbutzim never contained more than 5 per cent of the Jewish population of Palestine or Israel. Hence, whatever their other limitations, they cannot be said to constitute Israeli society or to be evidence for Israel being a socialist country.

<sup>32</sup> J. Amital, editor, in SIAH no. 5, August 1970.

up in the region and to consolidate both the Zionist régime and the reactionary Arab régimes. RAKAH originally defined this plan as an attempt by the us 'to save its tottering influence in the Arab world'<sup>33</sup>; it subsequently called for a joint struggle of all peace-loving forces in Israel to implement it. The key to this absurd position is the policy of the USSR, since the Rogers plan is the result of an agreement between the us and the USSR.

In 1965 there was a split in the party, when the Mikunis-Sneh leadership, which had always leaned towards Zionism, demanded a 'more constructive' policy towards Zionism. This group supported the June 1967 war and applied for membership of the Zionist Congress. Although it has usurped the official daily paper of the party and its name MAKI, it hardly has any influence in Israel. The other faction, led by Vilner and Tuby, is the same old Stalinist party; it has an equal number of Jewish and Arab members, and appears under the name of New Communist List, RAKAH. Actually, there is nothing new about it. The CP has always defended the rights of the Palestinian Arabs, and not only their right to self-determination, but many of their daily rights in Israel. It has waged a courageous, trade-union day-to-day struggle to defend the rights of the Palestinians, but it abandoned the theory and practice of revolution a long time ago. It is now dedicated to the slogan of 'the peaceful road to socialism', and considers its main goal to be 'peace and democracy'.

It was this absence of revolutionary politics that compelled a group of members to leave MAKI in 1962 and to form the Israeli Socialist Organization, better known by the name of its magazine, Matzpen (compass). The Matzpen group accepted the MAKI positions on the right of the Palestinian people as well as the Israeli people to self-determination. It gives primacy to the anti-Zionist struggle and subordinates all other issues, such as the economic struggle of the working class, to this struggle. It considers the overthrow of Zionism as the first task confronting revolutionaries in Israel. At the same time it believes that Israeli society, unlike white society in South Africa, can be revolutionized from within, provided that such a development is subordinated to revolutionary developments in the Arab world. Despite its small size Matzpen has gained influence among the youth in Israel, especially after the 1967 June war, which it opposed. Matzpen has carried out an open dialogue with left tendencies within the Palestinian resistance movement, and throughout the Arab world. It supports anti-imperialist struggles and the Palestinian struggle against Israeli domination. However, it does not support Arab nationalism, or Nasserism. Recently two tendencies split off from Matzpen on these issues. One considers the struggle against Zionism irrelevant, and is calling for ordinary 'working-class struggle against bourgeois policies'. The other regards Arab nationalism as a revolutionary force. Such a split was expected, but the majority of Matzpen members have chosen to reject these two lines. Matzpen believes that revolutionaries in Israel have a significant role to play in contributing to the overthrow of Zionism within Israeli society; and in this Matzpen differs not only

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<sup>33</sup> *Zo Hadrakh*, September 2nd, 1970.

from STAH and the Communist Party, but also from the groups which have split off.

This analysis has illustrated the specific class structure of Israeli society, and the particular structure of the ruling class. It is a society formed through immigration and the colonization of an already populated land, a society whose internal unity is maintained through conflict with an external enemy. In this society the ruling class is allied to imperialism and depends on it, but does not itself serve imperialism by economic exploitation of the Israeli people. This class rules through a set of bureaucratic institutions that were developed during the colonization process (Histadrut, Jewish Agency), and only a subordinate section of it operates through private ownership of the means of production. These features cannot be explained as products of the internal dynamic of Israeli society; yet they are easily understood as products of the dynamic of the Zionist enterprise as a whole.

Both the experience of political activity in Israel and the theoretical conclusions presented here lead to a conclusion about the strategy of the revolutionary struggle in Israel: in the immediate future political struggle against the Zionist nature of the régime must take precedence over everything else. This struggle must be directed to win the support of all those who directly suffer from Zionism. This includes all those who, like Israeli youth or the Israeli Arabs, are brought in their daily experience into conflict with the régime itself. It is a strategy which points to the shattering of the Zionist character of the régime.

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## *Presentation of Blanqui*

The lifetime of Auguste Blanqui (1805–81) coincides with the rise and fall of the secret society as an effective harbinger of socialism. Auguste Blanqui was the son of a low rank imperial official; his first recorded political involvement was in 1827 when he was wounded on the barricades; he subsequently spent more than 30 years of his life in various prisons. 'Blanquism' represented the point of merger between revolutionary Jacobinism and the rising working-class movement. Blanqui served his political apprenticeship under the Restoration and the Orleanist monarchy. His most formative political influence was that of Buonarotti, the veteran of Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals in 1795. Blanqui's disciples were the closest allies of Marx in the First International after the Commune, and became instrumental in the introduction of Marxism in France.

Fundamentally, Blanqui's outlook was that of an 18th century materialist. As Piatnitsky notes in his initial chapter of *Armed Insurrection*,<sup>1</sup> what separates Blanquist Communism from Marxism is its absence of a dialectic. This absence of dialectic was crucial in shaping Blanqui's attitude towards the proletariat and hence towards the tactics of an uprising. Blanqui conceived the bourgeois state as 'a gendarmerie of the rich against the poor'; its power rested upon the twin pillars of the military and the 'black army' (priests). While the former could suppress revolt by virtue of its superior mode of organization, the latter sus-

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<sup>1</sup> *Armed Insurrection*, 'A. Neuberger' (Piatnitsky, Tukhachevsky, Ho Chi Minh, Wollenberg and others), NLB, 1970.

tained reaction and passivity by the systematic inculcation of superstition and unreason. Thus while Blanqui took over from the Babouvists the conception of history as class struggle, it was evident that from this pre-dialectical rationalist standpoint, insurrectionary initiative could not in the first instance come from the masses themselves. In Blanqui's view, the working class was deprived of education, overworked by the employing class and finally perverted and blinded by the domination of superstition. Insurrection, therefore, was perforce an art only effectively practised by the revolutionary minority of the enlightened.

It must be remembered, of course, that the formative years of Blanquism—1830-48—were years in which the French working class barely existed, and the modern conception of a proletarian party (a product of Germany in the 1860's) had not yet emerged. The mode of organization of the Blanquist secret society was deliberately intended to be as far as possible a mirror image of that of the forces of order at the disposal of the State. The secret society was hierarchic and finally autocratic. The duty of the revolutionary in it was absolute obedience. Democracy within the society was completely eliminated by the imperative of secrecy that suffused it. In the 2,500-strong Blanquist society at the end of the Second Empire, members were divided into groups of 10, and were to be wholly unaware of the existence of other members outside their own group. In the Société des Saisons of 1837-39, the structure of command was secret, each member relating only to his immediate superior. Blanqui's reasoning was that the effectiveness and co-ordination of the armed revolutionary group would demoralize the enemy forces, caught by surprise, and provoke the desertion of crucial detachments.

This enforced insulation of the revolutionary corps from all contact with the masses was obviously the fatal flaw in Blanqui's approach. While a suitable model for resistance struggles against foreign powers, it was self-defeating in the case of social revolution. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Blanquism was simply putschism. Blanqui himself was well aware that no insurrection could succeed unless the objective conditions were favourable. Nevertheless his self-imposed isolation from the masses led to disastrous mistakes in timing. This can be seen again and again, in 1839, 1848 and 1870-71. On May 12th 1839, after two years in prison, Blanqui overestimated the revolutionary spirit of the masses, and the insurrection he planned was a fiasco. Seven months later Parisian workers were demanding to demonstrate with guns. On February 24th 1848, the Revolution again broke out in Paris. Blanqui was not there. On March 17th when the Parisian masses were in their most insurrectionary mood, Blanqui let the opportunity slip. Then two months later an attempted Blanquist invasion of the National Assembly on May 15th was a debacle. During the June uprising a few weeks later, Blanqui was once more in prison. The burial of Victor Noir in January 1870 could have been a signal for popular uprising, but the Blanquists failed to take advantage of the occasion. On August 9th 1870, when 100,000 demonstrated outside the Legislative Assembly, a seizure of power was again a possibility. But the attempted Blanquist insurrection in Belleville five days later attracted

no support from the workers. This failure prevented the Blanquists from taking any advantage of the end of the Empire on September 4th. Finally, on March 18th 1871, the Commune came into being in Paris. But Blanqui had already left for the provinces: he was captured by Thiers, and spent the duration of the Commune in a strongly guarded prison in Cahors. Thus in each of his attempts to stage an uprising, it was not so much the government that was surprised as the masses themselves.

*Instructions for an Uprising*, printed below, reveals many of the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of Blanqui's position. On the one hand, he shows detailed knowledge of the weapons of struggle, the tactical use of balconies, the crucial importance of morale; on the other hand, he dismisses all but the military potential of barricades, and obsessively emphasizes discipline and co-ordination to the point of excluding the masses from any positive involvement in their own emancipation. These contradictions and limitations must be seen historically. The Blanquist strategy was born in a period when the modern labour movement did not exist, when militants were haunted by the reverberations of 1793, and when the capture of the Paris Hotel de Ville might plausibly be taken for the overthrow of the state. It could not survive in a period when socialism meant the creative revolutionary practice of the masses. But one positive heritage of Blanqui lives on. Insurrection is an art: the conquest of power cannot be left wholly to spontaneity.

If for this reason alone, revolutionary Marxism has reason to pay homage to Blanqui.



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## Instructions for an Uprising

An insurrection in Paris today, based on old models, has no chance of success. In 1830 popular enthusiasm alone could overthrow a power surprised and terrified by an armed uprising: an unthinkable event which went far beyond any of its predictions. This could work once. The government then learned its lesson. Although founded by a revolution, it remained a counter-revolutionary monarchy. It began to study the strategy of street warfare and its superior skill and discipline soon gave it the advantage over the people's inexperience and confusion. Yet it is said that the people won in 1848 by the methods of 1830. This is all right, but there should be no illusions; the victory of February was only a lucky chance. If Louis Philippe had seriously defended himself, power would have stayed with the uniforms. The proof is the June days. It is there that we can see how fatal were the tactics of the rising or rather its lack of tactics. Never had an insurrection had such good odds: ten to one. On one side, the government in open anarchy, the troops demoralized; on the other, the workers were

ready and almost certain of success. Why did they fail? Lack of organization. To understand their defeat, we only have to analyse their strategy.

The uprising breaks out. Immediately, in the workers' quarters barricades go up, here and there, anywhere and everywhere.

Five, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty men, recruited at random, most of them unarmed, begin to overturn carriages, pull out and pile up paving stones to block the thoroughfares, sometimes in the middle of streets, more often at their intersections. Many of these barricades could scarcely be considered obstacles for the cavalry. Sometimes after the rough beginnings of a defence, the barricade's builders would suddenly leave it to set off in search of guns and ammunition.

In June there were more than six hundred barricades. Thirty, at the most, bore all the costs of the battle. Another nineteen or twenty never even burned gunpowder. From this arose those glorious bulletins which recounted with fanfare the seizure of fifty barricades where not a soul was to be found. While some were tearing up the streets, other small gangs ran from one place to another, disarming the security guards by taking powder and arms from the national guards. All of this was done at the whim of individual fantasy with neither co-ordination nor direction. Meanwhile, little by little, a certain number of barricades, higher, stronger, and better constructed, attracted defenders who gathered there. The placement of these principal fortifications was determined not by calculation but by chance; only a few by military stratagem occupied the major intersections.

During this first period of the insurrection, the government troops were brought together. The generals received and studied police reports. They carefully avoided exposing their troops before they had definite information, to avoid risking a failure which would demoralize the soldiers. As soon as they knew the positions of the insurgents, they grouped the regiments at various points which were from then on the bases of operations.

The armies confront each other. It is here that the faults of the popular tactic become obvious: a certain cause of disaster. No general command, thus no direction, not even co-ordination among the fighters. Each barricade had its particular group, varying in size but always isolated. Whether it has ten or one hundred men, it keeps up no communication with the other posts. Often there is not even a leader to direct the defence, and if there is one, his influence is almost non-existent. The soldiers only do what they feel like doing: one goes, another comes; they stay, they leave, they come back again, following their fancy. At night they go to bed.

Because of these perpetual comings and goings, the number of citizens present changes quickly by a third, by half, sometimes by three-quarters. No one can count on anyone else. From this, suspicion of success and discouragement quickly arise. No one knows much about what is happening elsewhere, and what is more, no one cares. Rumours

circulate, sometimes dark, sometimes rosy. Soldiers listen tranquilly to the cannon and gunfire while drinking at the wine merchant's counter. As for bringing help to attacked positions, the idea does not even arise. 'Let each man defend his post and all will go well,' say the most solid. This singular reasoning is due to the fact that most of the insurgents fought in their own neighbourhoods; a capital error which has disastrous consequences, among others the denunciation by neighbours after the defeat.

For defeat is inevitable with this strategy. It comes at the end in the form of two or three regiments which charge the barricade and crush some of its defenders. The whole battle is only the monotonous rehearsal for this invariable manoeuvre. While the insurgents smoke their pipes behind their pile of stones, the enemy successively focuses all its strength, first on one point, then on a second, a third, a fourth, and so on and thus completely wipes out the insurrection. The population does not bother to obstruct this agreeable task. Each group philosophically awaits its turn and does not dream of running to the aid of its neighbour. No! It is defending its post, its post must not be abandoned. What an absurd reason for dying!

When, as a result of such a serious error, the great Parisian revolt of '48 was broken like glass by the most pitiful of governments, what catastrophe would we not have to fear if the same stupidity is begun again in the face of a ferocious militarism which now has at its service the formidable conquests of science and art, railroads, the electric telegraph, the rifle, the Chassepot gun?

However, one item which must be struck from the list of the enemy's new advantages is the strategic avenues which now furrow the city in all directions. They are feared. This is wrong. They are nothing to worry about. Far from having created another danger to the insurrection, as was imagined, they offer on the contrary a mixture of inconveniences and advantages for both sides. If on the one hand it is easier for the troops to circulate, they are at the same time much more vulnerable. Such streets are not practical under fire. Besides, the balconies, unlike ordinary windows, serve as miniature bastions which supply fire from the flanks. Finally, these long straight avenues perfectly merit the name boulevards with which they have been baptised. They are, in effect, veritable boulevards (ramparts) which constitute the natural defence fronts of a very great force.

The weapon *par excellence* in street warfare is the rifle. The cannon makes much more noise than its worth. Artillery is only able to act effectively by causing incendiary destruction. But such an atrocity used widely and systematically would soon turn against its users and would be their downfall. The grenade, which is now mistakenly called a 'bomb', is a secondary method, subject moreover to a host of inconveniences. It consumes a lot of powder for little effect, is very dangerous to handle, has no range and can only be thrown from windows. Paving stones do almost as much damage and do not cost as much. Workers have no money to lose.

For the interior of houses it should be the revolver, or carbine, or bayonet, sword, sabre and dagger. In open combat, pikes and eight-foot long spears would triumph over the bayonet.

The army has only two major advantages over the people: the Chassepot gun, and organization. This latter is especially formidable, irresistible. Fortunately it can be seized from them, and once this is done the upper hand passes to the insurgents.

In civil struggles, the soldiers, except for some rare exceptions, only march with repugnance, under constraint and slightly drunk. They would certainly prefer to be elsewhere, and look more willingly behind than before them. But they are held by an iron hand. They are slaves and victims of a pitiless discipline; with no love for their masters, they obey only fear and are incapable of the slightest initiative. A cut-off detachment is a lost detachment. The leaders, well aware of this, are primarily concerned with maintaining communications with all their troops. This necessity negates a part of their effectiveness. In the popular ranks, there is nothing like this. There they are fighting for an idea. If they are superior to the adversary in devotion, they are yet more superior in intelligence. They have the advantage over him morally and even physically, by conviction, vigour, the richness of their resources, vitality of body and mind. They have head and heart. No troops in the world are equal to this elite.

What, then, prevents their victory? They lack the unity and solidarity which in directing them towards a goal would produce all those qualities which their isolation destroys. They lack organization. Without it their situation is hopeless. Organization is victory. Disunity is death. June 1848 placed this truth beyond dispute. What then would happen today? Using the old methods, the entire population would be destroyed if the troops resist, and they will resist as long as they are confronted only by irregular forces without direction. On the other hand, the appearance of a popular Parisian army in good order, manoeuvring with set tactics, will stupefy the soldiers and dissolve their resistance.

A military organization, especially when it must be improvised on the battlefield, is no small problem for our party. It necessitates a commander in chief and, up to a certain point, the usual series of officers of all ranks. Where is this personnel to be recruited? Revolutionary bourgeois or socialists are rare, and the few that there are fight only the war of the pen. These gentlemen shake the world with their books and their newspapers and for 16 years have scribbled endlessly without ever tiring of their deceptions. With an undying patience, they endure the saddles, the bits, the whips, without even rearing up against them. They curse, of course. Strike blows? Only the rabble do that.

These heroes of the writing table profess the same disdain for the sword as the soldiers have for their endless rigamarole. They do not seem to suspect that force is the sole guarantee of liberty, that a country is enslaved when its citizens do not know how to use weapons and abandon that privilege to a caste or corporation. In the republics of

antiquity, Greek and Roman, everyone knew and practised the art of war. The professional soldier was an unknown species. Cicero was a general, Caesar a lawyer. In trading his toga for a uniform, the former found himself colonel or captain and was equally effective in that role. As long as it is not like this in France, we will remain civilians at the mercy of professional soldiers.

Thousands of educated young people, workers and bourgeois, shudder under an abhorrent yoke. In order to break it do they dream of taking up arms? No! Definitely not! The pen, always the pen, nothing but the pen. Why not both, as is the responsibility of a republican? In times of tyranny to write is good, but to battle is better—when the enslaved pen remains powerless. They write newspapers, go to jail and no one even thinks of opening a book of manoeuvres, to learn in 24 hours the trade which gives strength to our oppressors and which would put into our hands our revenge and their punishment.

But what good are these complaints? It is the stupid habit of our times to complain instead of acting. The style is Lamentations. Jeremiah poses in all the attitudes. He cries, he castigates, he dogmatizes, he governs wilfully, he thunders; he is himself calamity among the calamities. Let us forget these buffoons of the elegy, grave-diggers of liberty. The duty of a revolutionary is always to struggle, to struggle no matter what the odds, to struggle to extinction.

Are we lacking the cadres for the formation of an army? They must be improvised on the very field during the action. The people of Paris will furnish the elements—ex-soldiers, ex-national guards. For reasons of scarcity, the number of officers and subordinate officers will have to be reduced to a minimum. This does not matter. The zeal, the ardour, and the intelligence of the volunteers will compensate for this deficit. The essential point is organization—whatever the cost. There must be no more of these tumultuous uprisings of ten thousand isolated heads, acting randomly, in disorder, with no thought of the whole, each in his own corner and according to his own fantasy. There must be no more of these barricades, haphazardly erected, which waste time, encumber the streets and prevent the circulation which is as necessary to one side as it is to the other. The republican must have his freedom of movement as well as the troops. There must be no useless frenzy, chaos, and clamour! Minutes and steps are equally precious. It is essential that no person be isolated in his own neighbourhood, something which the insurgents, to their great misfortune, have always failed to achieve. This mania has caused defeat, but facilitates its own remedy. It must be cured, under threat of catastrophe.

*Translated by Russell Jacoby.*



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## The Student Left in Japan

Gavan McCormack

The Japanese student movement has won world-wide publicity in recent years for its militancy. Repeated images have been conveyed of helmeted, staff-wielding students doing massive and heroic battle with the police, of their holding out against helicopter-borne assaults on their university strongholds, or of their hi-jacking aircraft at sword-point. The media coverage of such incidents, however sensational, vague and sporadic, seems to have left a deep impact. Yet there has been relatively little serious information or discussion on the Japanese student Left in the other advanced capitalist countries. In this article, I will try to set out my impressions of the direction and present state of the movement, based on my recent experience in Tokyo University (May 1969–August 1970), on readings of the regular press and revolutionary journals in Japan, and those few writings which are available in Western Europe or North America.<sup>1</sup> It should not be thought, of course, that the student movement is the only form of militant socialist struggle in Japan today. It is much to be hoped that some complementary study of the Japanese workers' movement will become available in English in the near future.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, the main sources for European or American readers are the following: Bernard Béraud, *La Gauche Révolutionnaire au Japon*, Seuil, Paris, 1970; S. Dowsey (ed), *Zengakuren: Japan's Revolutionary Students*, Ishi Press, Berkeley, 1970; S. Belloni, *Zengakuren-Zenkyaetsu*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1969; Jürgen Selfert, *Zengakuren*, Trikont Verlag, Munich 1969; *Plain Rapper*, Palo-Alto, October–November 1969; *Red Mole*, London, March 17th, 1970. Readers interested in further study of the problem may consult copies of *Anpo*, the only English-language publication of the Japanese New Left (6 dollars a year to Anpo, Ishii Building, 6–44 Kagurazaka, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo); the Bulletin of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (4 dollars a year to 1737 Cambridge St, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA); and the Bulletin of the Association for Radical East Asian Studies (22 Chepstow Crescent, London, W.11).

## Economic and Political Background

The developments of the decade just ended form a convenient unit, set off in time by the two Security Treaty struggles: the huge and dramatic one of May–June 1960, and the somewhat anticlimactic one of June 1970 against the renewal of the us–Japan Joint Security Treaty.

This Key North Pacific alliance was originally the bargain struck by the us with Japan in which the terms of liquidation of the post-war occupation were agreed upon, sovereignty restored to Japan by the occupation GHQ and the Peace Treaty signed. It is necessary to distinguish two sides to this Treaty settlement, one implicit and one explicit. To understand the implicit part, a brief comment is needed first on the situation of the Left in Japan in the immediate post-war years and on the kind of policy then pursued by the occupation. In a crucial way the experience of the established Left, the Communist Party, was unique in these post-war years, in that it found itself collaborating quite closely with the Americans indeed welcoming them as liberators. The early occupation policy was noted for the degree of enthusiasm and idealism that accompanied the carrying out of bourgeois-democratic reforms and the dismantling of some elements of the old semi-feudal, semi-fascist régime—the partial breakup of the *Zaibatsu*, an extensive land reform, purge of most fascist officials, release of long-imprisoned communist cadres, lifting the restrictions on trade-union organizing activity, and last but not least passage of a constitution unique in that by its Article 9 it was declared that ‘the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right to the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes . . . land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.’ In defeated Japan’s post-Hiroshima mood the general programme was a welcome one—bourgeois-democratic and pacifistic.

But though the reforms were extremely wide their limits soon became apparent; already by September 1946 MacArthur was declaring that the Left was the main enemy and in early 1947 he intervened to forbid a projected general strike and to declare illegal strikes by public employees. The JCP, used to co-operation with the occupation, erred seriously in accepting the prohibition. Then in 1949 the JCP won 3 million votes in the General Election, the communists were victorious in the Chinese civil war and the Korean war broke out the following year—events which combined not just to delay but to reverse the thrust of democratic reforms. For Japan had to be built up as a base for a new China/Korea strategy, the threat of the Japanese Left to be forestalled, and Japan gradually rearmed, despite the Constitution, and built up as a firm free-world ally.<sup>2</sup>

In 1950 the red purge, begun sporadically in 1949 with police raids on Universities and harassing of striking workers and pursued in earnest

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<sup>2</sup> On this shift in us policy see John Dower, ‘The Eye of the Beholder; background notes on the us–Japan Military Relationship’, *CCAS Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 1 October 1969, and also on Halliday, ‘Japan—Asian Capitalism’.

with the sacking of communist teachers and workers, the banning of communist papers and the hounding of the Party leadership either underground or to refuge in Peking. The JCP was not able to re-emerge as an open political force until 1955.

Here we have the implicit part of the bargain of the Security Treaty settlement—the established Left, collaborating with the authorities to achieve the bourgeois democratization of Japan, was smashed to make way instead for the flowering of monopoly capitalism and re-militarization. In the explicit part of the deal too, while the U.S. purported to restore full sovereignty to Japan, it actually did so within very severe limitations. In the first place Okinawa was withheld altogether from the settlement, and was converted into the lynchpin of us military planning for the Far East. It is an ideal location for a complex of bases, located as it is 800 miles from Hong Kong, Manila or Tokyo, 400 miles from Taiwan and 440 miles from Shanghai. There are now 80,000 us troops there in 120 camps which take up 26 per cent of Okinawa's land surface and employ 45,000 of the 240,000 workers there; these bases thus constitute the island's principal economic resource.<sup>3</sup> Secondly a large chain of crucial bases, aerial and naval, was retained under exclusive us control on the Japanese mainland itself, amounting still in 1970 to 14 bases, manned by 41,000 troops. This base complex is primarily an instrument in the furthering of the us grand Pacific imperialistic design. Specific involvement in America's Vietnam operations is the current conspicuous example of that co-operation: the provision (in Okinawa as well as in Japan proper) of bases, including harbours, air bases, supply depots, hospitals and rehabilitation centres; the supply by Japanese industry of ammunition (bullets, white phosphorus and napalm), many kinds of vehicles and even sacks for corpses.

Secondly, while Japanese strategic, political and economic interests were co-ordinated with overall us planning for the Far East and hence possibilities of an independent foreign policy drastically curtailed, her military expenditure has been able to be kept to a very low, though now rapidly expanding, percentage of the national budget (7 per cent in 1969) and this has played quite an important role in allowing the concentration of resources on building up the strongly competitive world economic power the country enjoys today. However, growth, tied thus directly to us policies, is enmeshing the country more and more deeply in the same problems and sinking it in the same quagmire. Overseas investment is heavily concentrated in Taiwan, South Korea and S.E. Asia.<sup>4</sup> In 1967 Japan's East Asian trade accounted for 15.4 per cent of imports and 28.2 per cent of exports; Japan is the leading trading partner of Taiwan, Thailand and Hong Kong, second in the case of South Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia. Japanese industry has become dependent to an important degree on raw material imports from S.E. Asia—for 39 per cent of its iron ore, 53 per cent of timber, nearly all its rubber; in return, it exports 40 per cent of its chemical products (mainly fertilizers), 24 per cent of its iron and steel and 28 per

<sup>3</sup> Generally on Okinawa see 'Okinawa in the American Empire', ANPO No. 5.

<sup>4</sup> For the following statistics see Jim Shoch, 'Changing the Guard in Asia: toward Japanese Rearmament' in *Plain Reporter*, op. cit.

cent of its machinery to the area. But while relations with these 'free world' countries of the Asian periphery become closer and consequently the Japanese interest in preserving the status quo in the region stronger,<sup>3</sup> near total estrangement from China and North Korea continues and grows deeper. Of the utmost significance is the joint communique issued by Prime Minister Satō and President Nixon at their November 1969 meeting.

In this important document Prime Minister Satō declared that under present circumstances the presence of United States forces in the Far East was making a major contribution to the peace and security of the region and promised that in future Japan would make also 'a positive contribution to Asian peace and prosperity', thus in effect endorsing the Asianization programme as outlined in the Guam Doctrine. Asians might be less than comforted by the thought that the American standard of peace and security for Asia was thus to be taken over by Japan. Then, noting the continued existence of the strained situation in the Korean peninsula, the communique stated that 'the security of the Republic of Korea was essential to Japan's own security'. Another most important factor for the security of Japan was the maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan straits. Coming to the subject of Okinawa itself, it was agreed that 'Should peace in Vietnam not have been realized by the time reversion of Okinawa is scheduled to take place, the two governments would fully consult with each other in the light of the situation at that time so that reversion would be accomplished without affecting the United States' efforts to assure the South Vietnamese people the opportunity to determine their own political future without outside interference.' Finally the Governments of both countries agreed in appraising highly the role played by the Security Treaty in the peace and security of the Far East including Japan, and announced their intention to hold fast to it. In this very back-door way was the Treaty thus effectively renewed, the defence of the Japanese islands directly linked to that of South Korea, Taiwan and South Vietnam, and the dispatch of Japanese troops in accordance with this new defence principle foreshadowed. This is not an isolated example, but it is certainly the most authoritative one, of the progressive widening of Japan's defence perimeter, now in business circles at least assumed to stretch as far as the Malacca straits.

As the constitutional prohibition on the holding of armed forces at all was gradually broken in the early '50's with the creation first of a national police reserve and then of what are now known euphemistically as the ground, sea and air Self-Defence Forces, so the Satō-Nixon communique suggests it will be further undermined in future with the effort to send those troops abroad in forward defence of growing Japanese interests in the Far East. The Constitution is troublesome and anomalous, and not surprisingly calls for its amendment are heard more and more frequently. An interesting trial is at present in progress

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<sup>3</sup> An important recent trend in Japanese investment is toward not only adding manufacturing projects but investing in long term development projects, such as the Mekong River scheme and the Asian Highway.

in Japan of an SDF Sergeant on charges arising from his distributing anti-war material in his barracks—from which it would seem possible that the ultimate irony may be not far away, in which someone is convicted of an offence for distributing copies of the constitution.

The SDF now number some 260,000 men, their equipment second to none. The aerial section has now 200 Japanese made F104s, 330 F86 and 500 other planes, with future plans speaking of a 4,000–5,000 plane force. The maritime section has patrols in the Malacca Straits between Malaysia and Indonesia and in the Sea of Japan, and is increasingly active in 'good-will' visits to South East Asian ports. Japan is now planning to spend some 15.7 billion dollars during the Fourth Defence Buildup Programme (1972–77), thus increasing the present level of expenditure, already the world's 7th largest, by nearly 2½ times. Mitsubishi, the giant pre-war Zaibatsu and principal military-industrial giant, has re-emerged as the major contractor to the government for fighter-planes, missiles, tanks, submarines, destroyers and so on, while Mitsubishi Electric President Okubo Ken is on record as favouring the addition of nuclear weapons to the present arsenal<sup>6</sup>. Business leaders at the Japan Federation of Employers Associations meeting in August 1969 reached the same conclusion—nuclear arms for Japan some time after the mid-1970's. The Japan Ordnance Association, on which 89 firms, including giants such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Yawata Iron and Steel, Hitachi, Toshiba, Toyota Motors, Nippon Electric and Japan Steel are represented, is urging the Government to increase total military spending from the present 7 per cent of the budget to about 23 per cent and to lift the ban on the export of arms to South East Asia. It may be noted incidentally that 77 per cent of 1969's defence contracts were concluded without bidding, a fact which may be partly accounted for by the turning of an official blind eye to the recruitment of retired officers to defence-related industries.<sup>7</sup>

Anpo Taisei, the Security Treaty System, has been a key determinant of the lines of Japanese development since its inception, and positions taken on its continuation, strengthening or abolition are key political reference points. Radicalism often begins from the demand that it be abolished, deepens as one understands the complex ramifications it has on so many areas of Japanese life and as one experiences the full weight of State power which is brought to bear to harass or crush opposition to it. This experience in turn can lead to a full-scale challenge, a revolutionary challenge, to the present order.

### Student Movement: Zengakuren and the JCP

Zengakuren, the All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Governing Bodies, was founded in 1948 on a programme surprising now for its

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<sup>6</sup> On this question generally see Herbert P. Bix, 'The Security Treaty System and the Japanese Military-Industrial Complex,' *CCAS Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 2, January 1970.

<sup>7</sup> The National Defence White Paper, released on October 20th, also claims that it is 'permissible in the Constitution for Japan to possess nuclear weapons' and that 'juridically speaking, Japan could have some small-size nuclear weapons of minimum strength necessary for self-defence'.

relatively moderate, democratic tone—opposition to the re-emergence of fascism in education, absolute freedom of organizing in the student movement, etc. Till 1950 activities centred on the attack on reactionary professors, but the opening of the Korean war and the signing of the San Francisco Treaty greatly deepened and strengthened the student grasp of the nature of us imperialism and the nature of renascent Japanese capitalism's involvement with it. It was not until 1958, however, that the student movement made decisive steps away from JCP domination as the party made clear its commitment to revisionist moderation. In that year emerged the League of Communists (Kyōsandō or Bund), and shortly afterwards the League of Revolutionary Communists (Kakkyōdō). However, despite the plethora of organizations which sprang up to outflank it on its left, the JCP continued and continues to command considerable strength, principally today through the Democratic Youth League (Minsei) founded in 1964. Of the student organizations therefore, Minsei has to be treated first.

Minsei defines its position in terms of four principal themes:

Peace, independence and democracy

Union of all Japanese students

Defence of student conditions (better grants etc.)

Solidarity with world youth in the struggle for independence.

The programme is more important for what is omitted than for what is included, and yet these moderate demands draw the allegiance of a somewhat larger number of politically active students than do the demands of the radical Left. Recent estimates give Minsei control of the self-governing committees of about 98 universities with an enrolment of 453,000 students. At the base there are perhaps 12,000 militants, and they can rely on the backing of 38,000 irregulars. Militant anti-JCP students control about 440,000 students, but that control is divided in practice between many factions.

It should be explained here in parenthesis that by the Japanese system all students are automatically inscribed on the autonomous committee of their faculty, whichever group happens to be controlling it. The system has the unfortunate effect of enhancing factionalism, and indeed, nowadays, the very word Zengakuren has come to have very little meaning. The rival factions of the organized student movement do not co-operate and needless to say there is nothing corresponding in any way to the British-style apolitical National Union of Students. Over the past decade, the self-governing committees of the nation's departments and universities have been aligned broadly in three separate and generally hostile groups: the pro-CP Minsei; the independent and go-it-alone Kakumaru or Revolutionary Marxists, who have some juridical claim to be the authentic successors of the original Zengakuren; and the group of factions known in the past first as Sampa (Three Faction), then Goha (Five Faction), then Happa (Eight Faction) Alliance—which, upon developing to include many non-organised radicals in a remarkable break from traditional factional exclusiveness, was in late 1969 reorganized as Zenkyoto, the All-Japan Federation of Joint Struggle Committees.

In the late 50's and early 60's, on the important issues of the degree of



emphasis to be accorded the struggle against us and Japanese imperialism and against Japanese capitalism, and of where and how the struggle should be engaged in, the JCP, after some hesitation, adopted the line that the primary task was to carry through Japan's bourgeois-democratic revolution, leading as a corollary to the priority of domestic issues and to an emphasis on the bourgeois-parliamentary arena (the need to build up an electoral machine, win votes and so on). Extra-parliamentary direct action in the streets was dismissed as left extremism.

In practice the commitment of JCP-affiliated groups to 'democratic methods' and 'democratization' is expressed in some curious ways. In Tokyo University last year, for example, the democracy slogans visible on many walls were, given the situation of a long strike and occupation successive clashes with riot police and mass arrests, calls for a simple sell-out. Not only did Minsei want to negotiate on the administration's terms but it also engaged the striking students in battle on a number of occasions in an effective if unholy alliance with the riot police to smash the strike. Presumably the calculation was that the mass of centre-of-the-road, so-called 'non-poli' students were so fed up with prolonged closure and occupation and hence suspension of classes (up to a year in some cases), that they would mobilize under Minsei leadership and with riot police backing to smash the strike, and would accept that the militants, Minsei's bitter rivals, be carried off to gaol sentences. Thus the JCP's prophecy that direct action in the style of the new or radical Left will lead to loss of the bases of action — in the case of workers, factories, and in the case of students, universities — should perhaps be seen as self-fulfilling. A graphic illustration of the difference in the two styles of activity is provided in the incident of October 8th, 1967. On this occasion the non-JCP Left did battle with the police around Haneda Airport in an attempt to prevent Satō from leaving on a visit to South-East Asian capitals (including Saigon) which radicals analysed as a further step in the incorporation of us and Japanese imperialism. JCP students instead attended a party at the offices of the party newspaper Akahata. There is perhaps one other way in which the conservative influence of the JCP is felt and that is that in discouraging students from struggling on any front wider than the university it is helping to isolate the various forces within society that might conceivably unite to change it.

### Zengakuren: Splits and Factions

Broadly speaking, the spectrum of the non-JCP left groups include quasi-Trotskyist, Maoist, 'Structural Reformist', and Anarchist groups. The principal quasi-Trotskyist organizations are Chukaku or Core and Kakumaru or Revolutionary Marxists. Both, or their parent organizations, Bund and Kakkyōdō, were founded in opposition to international communism's post-1956 revisionist line. They stood on the general principle of world revolution as opposed to peaceful co-existence, socialist revolution as opposed to national democratic revolution. In a general sense they are critical of the 1960 struggle leadership by Bund — the League of Communists — for having failed to develop an effective, disciplined organization or comprehensive

ideology and for being petty-bourgeois extremist. Critics suggest that in attempting to set right the deficiencies they may have gone too far in the other direction. Both groups insist they are anti-imperialist and anti-Stalinist, but Kakumaru insists it is much more anti-Stalinist than Chūkaku is, and identifies Ho Chi Minh among others as a Stalinist. However Kakumaru is also extremely elitist and sectarian, insisting that it alone is the legitimate Zengakuren and refusing to participate in united front actions, as it regards compromise with anarchists and others as unprincipled. It argues that participation by non-aligned radicals and 'anarchist elements' in the Tokyo and Nihon University struggles of 1968-9 (to be discussed below), and the emphasis given to their slogans of 'Dissolve Tokyo University', 'Overthrow Nihon University', and 'Negate Self', led in the end to the inevitable loss of those struggles and of the bases from which mass struggle might otherwise have emerged. Kakumaru is more inclined to emphasize training and indoctrination of cadres through constant discussion and debate while Chūkaku has tended to be more pragmatic, less rigidly ideological and somewhat given to announcing every struggle as the 'decisive' one.<sup>8</sup> Since its abandonment of the Tokyo University auditorium struggle in 1969 shortly before the final battle in which members of Chūkaku and other factions were arrested and imprisoned, Kakumaru has been very much a lone wolf. Over the past year or so there have been frequent battles—with staves, iron pipes—between Kakumaru and other student groups, especially Chūkaku<sup>9</sup>. To take another example: at Waseda, a major private university in Tokyo of about 40,000 students, the first half of 1969 passed with Okuma Hall, the symbolic founder's hall, under occupation by Kakumaru, while the original site of contention at Waseda, the newly built No. 2 Student Hall across the road from it, remained under occupation by the other factions of the left alliance; the roadway between was the scene of intermittent battles between the two, the injured ending in a nearby hospital. On the rare occasions, as for the 'Liberate America' July 4th demonstration of 1970, when both groups have attended the same event without fighting, it has been because of the placing of the Citizens' Peace in Vietnam Committee between the hostile factions. From a recent report (August '70) it seems a Kakumaru student was recently beaten to death by Chūkaku students, the fourth or fifth death in recent years to result either from such inter-factional fighting or from athletic club lynchings of radicals. Chūkaku now controls some 36 self-governing committees with a membership of 67,800 students, of whom 2,000 are activists and 6,500 irregulars, while Kakumaru controls 30 self-governing committees with a membership of 66,000, of whom 1,800 are activists and 3,500 irregulars.

Chūkaku, long known as the most militant and resolute in street fighting and guerrilla activities, has recently been seriously hit by mass arrests,

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Article by Ōnuki Takeo in special issue of the weekly *Yasunori*, 'Tactics and Strategy for the November Decisive Battle', Nov. 13th, 1969. For an interesting account of Kakumaru in English see Nakanishi Masahiro, 'Kakumaru: Analysis of an Ultra-Radical Group', in S. Dowsey's book referred to above.

<sup>9</sup> Such factional fighting is known as '*nichi-geba*', *nichi* the Japanese word for inner and *geba* from the German '*geball*', pronounced '*gebariste*' in Japanese and meaning in the student sense the violence employed in the revolutionary struggle. '*Soto-geba*' on the other hand, or 'outer-geba', is used for street fighting with the police.

police seizure of its base areas and constant surveillance. In a striking reversal of previous form, in a June Hibiya Park rally attended by about 8,000, speeches were interspersed with songs and rock music. This partly reflects the need to expand and to secure a large popular area of support, but perhaps also reflects the need to build a counter culture that is not just one-dimensionally political as Japanese left movements have always tended to be.

The Maoists came together in 1963 with the formation of the League of Marxist-Leninists (ML), out of remnants of the old Bund, and was greatly expanded after 1966 with the formal expulsion of Maoists from the JCP. From 1968 the organization was formally constituted as the Japan League of Marxist-Leninists (M.L.) and its student section as the Student Liberation Front or SLF. They reject the Chūkaku criticism of China as being national chauvinist or bourgeois nationalist and attack Chūkaku for various ideological deficiencies—failure to grasp the importance of people's war and class war in Asia and concentration too exclusive a degree on the Security Treaty alone, although in practice there is a considerable area of co-operation between them and the other groups exclusive of Minsei and Kakumaru. When, after the major reverses of late 1969 and early 1970, other factions came unarmed to the Security Treaty joint demonstration of June this year, only ML fought the riot police with iron pipes and molotov cocktails.

The Anti-Imperialist group of Zengakuren, formed in 1968 after the break-up of the former 'Three Faction' Zengakuren alliance, is a major cluster of student organizations, made up of breakaway, revolutionary elements from the Socialist Party's youth and student struggle sections against the 1960 Security Treaty renewal, known variously as the Socialist League, Internationalists; Anti-Imperialist Student Council; Proletarian Military Group, together with the Maoist SLF. Between them this group controls 144,800 students, of whom 2,800 are activists and 8,300 irregulars.

Then there are the 'Structural Reform' groups, generally breakaway from the JCP of 1961 vintage, followers of Gramsci and Togliatti, who stand for auto-gestion in industry; the 4th International; the Preparatory Committee for an armed uprising, and various anarchist groups.

### The Red Army

Perhaps best known of all outside Japan is the group known as the Red Army, famed for its seizure and diversion to North Korea of a Japan Air Lines plane in April 1970. The group, and the incident for which it was responsible, will be treated here at greater length than any of the others, because not only can it tell us a lot about the state of the student movement but it sheds important light on the U.S.-Japan Treaty relationship and also on Japan-Korean relations.

The Red Army as a group is young—a July 1969 splinter group from the Socialist Student League's Unity faction, from which it parted company in disagreement over how the April 1969 Okinawa Da demonstrations in Tokyo should be assessed. The elements who formed

the new Red Army believed that though police repression had clearly increased sharply, the correct response was not to lie low and try to recoup but to step up the struggle by resort to firearms and the declaration of outright, absolute war on the bourgeoisie. On November 5th, 1969, 53 Red Army members were arrested in a pre-dawn raid on a remote mountain hut where they had been drilling with explosives and weapons preparing for an all-out assault on the government as part of the November action. Subsequent police raids on the organization throughout the country were then thought to have thoroughly smashed it, but in January 1970 the group surfaced again and about 700 members took part in a Tokyo rally. Then there were occasional rumours and suddenly at the end of March the hi-jacking news broke. The stated aim of the group was to set up international bases for world proletarian revolution, in North Korea, Cuba, Algeria.<sup>10</sup>

### Meaning of the Hi-jacking Incident

The actual course of events in the hi-jacking incident itself may be well known, but has to be restated in order to spell out the full, underlying significance of the affair. After seizure the plane was first diverted to the US base at Itazuki, ostensibly for refuelling. Its takeoff was for a time blocked by several US fighters while its captain, Ishida, was instructed to set his radio at 122.5 megacycles for emergency; Japan Air Lines, after a series of quick consultations with government and Self Defence Force officials, decided to ask the US 5th Air Force to protect the aircraft and try to prevent its going to Pyongyang. The plane then took off, but at some point in flight changed course and actually landed in Seoul. Defence Minister Nakasone published reports that North Korean MIG's had intercepted and fired on the craft and were thus responsible. Then followed a brief charade in which officials tried to persuade the students that they were actually in Pyongyang—which failed because of the conspicuous US vehicles around the runway and because nobody could produce a portrait of Kim Il Sung. Then followed a long four-day wait at Seoul airport. The North Koreans indignantly denied they had ever fired on or known anything about the plane's course and guaranteed that if the plane were to go to Pyongyang passengers and crew would be treated humanely and returned to Japan. In the end the deadlock was broken when Parliamentary Vice-Minister Yamamura went as hostage for the release of the passengers and the plane went off without further incident to North Korea, whence it was quickly returned, minus the students.

Behind that narrative of events, however, there are several important implications. First, as the plane's pilot and passengers all later denied ever having been fired on at all, where did this story, with the very serious consequences it might have had for peace in the area, originate and why? Defence Minister Nakasone first aired it and then Foreign Minister Aichi repeated it. But, as Japanese Self Defence Forces have no means of independent reconnaissance in the air space concerned, it must be concluded that the report originated with the 5th Air Force to serve some inscrutable US design. The integration of Japanese and US

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<sup>10</sup> For an account of the group and its activities in English see ANPO, No. 5.

defence systems to the point where Japan is totally dependent on the us for information which might embroil it in a war is a useful lesson in the meaning of the Security Treaty. Secondly, as the Japanese government denied any responsibility for the diversion of the plane from its Pyongyang course to Seoul, and as North Korea appears not to have been responsible either, again the 5th Air Force alone must have been responsible, presumably through flight instructions purporting to be from Pyongyang issued over the 122.5 megacycle wavelength. Few Japanese can take much comfort at the thought that the us Air Force is the invisible hand at the controls of even their civilian aircraft. Thirdly, the difference between government and public feeling towards North Korea was dramatically brought out. In 1965 relations between Japan and South Korea were 'normalized', various war reparation payments made, and Japanese capital ploughed into the economy in vast amounts.<sup>11</sup> With the North, however, no such accommodation was possible and to the government it is regarded simply as a dangerous foe. The propriety and humaneness of the North Korean treatment of this affair made the Japanese government look like flustered, foolish hawks. The constantly repeated government claim to be concerned above all for the safety of passengers and crew over the long four-day ordeal at Seoul airport was widely abhorred as a blatant lie covering up political motives rooted in the Far East Security System network and in simple anti-communism. It became clear in fact that the government was prepared if necessary to sacrifice passengers and crew in the interests of the Security Treaty.

Public feeling against the government grew so strong in the course of the affair that many serious commentators felt sure the government would have fallen and the entire Security Treaty system been imperilled had anything gone wrong with the aircraft or had Yamamura not come up with the stratagem of offering himself as a hostage. Fourthly, the incident is significant as the first serious attempt by the Japanese New Left to reach out on to the world arena, and as showing that the Japanese university struggles have produced at least one group of determined revolutionaries who have decided to go beyond the conventional tactics of street demonstrations and student strikes. While there can be no doubt that hi-jacking is no substitute for mass action it seems likely that this incident will be followed by other attempts at imaginative application of the unconventional tactics adopted by guerrilla fighters all over the world.

### The New Left and its Organizational Forms: Zenkyōtō

It is at least generally accepted by all factions of the non-jcp Left that the Japanese capitalist and increasingly imperialist society will be re-structured not by any parliamentary or electoral means but outside of

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<sup>11</sup> This agreement, carried out against a backdrop of martial law in Seoul and wide-scale rioting in Tokyo, marked the reopening of Korea to the export of Japanese surplus capital, first in the form of war reparations and credits, then of massive private investment and various 'technical co-operation' projects, etc—the effect of which has been progressively to incorporate South Korea into Japanese economic satellite status and to subordinate South Korean development to the needs of Japanese capital. It is in this context that the November 1969 statement of Prime Minister Sato, integrally linking the defence of Japan and Korea, takes its meaning.

parliament and finally by force of arms; that the engagement of the socialist and communist parties in the business of elections and the bourgeois, outmoded workings of the Diet serves merely to distract and delay the mass, revolutionary struggle which alone can work such a transformation. For students, their struggle is seen as a possible detonator of mass revolutionary struggle.

Reflecting this broad consensus, and the need too to collaborate against greatly increased repression, 'united front' style organizations have emerged in recent years to co-ordinate activity not only on the student level but also on that of workers and of citizens generally. With respect to the latter (Beheiren, or the Peace in Vietnam Committee) and the workers' organization (the Anti-war Youth Committee) space does not allow of any treatment here, but in the student case the organization is Zenkyōtō, or the Joint Struggle Committee. This organizational form came to maturity in the course of the long Tokyo University struggle in 1968, was subsequently copied elsewhere, and was expanded into a national federation in September of 1969. Its major significance is that for the first time the university movement spread from the ranks of the militant sectarian cadres to those of the student masses, to non-aligned radicals many of whom, formerly 'non-poli', became in the turmoil of 1968-70 a major force of activity. Faction-fighting remains a serious problem between Zenkyōtō and the two factions which remain outside and militantly opposed to it, the JCP's Minsei, and Kakumaru, but notwithstanding this the new federation was a big step forward.

Contrasting with the old Zengakuren, centralized and somewhat hierarchical in structure, with its built-in disadvantage of factional competition between both faculties and universities for control of the apparatus at every level, Zenkyōtō in essence arose in the course of the struggle and reflects very clearly the anti-authoritarian, anti-bureaucratic, egalitarian camaraderie of the world behind the barricades in which it was conceived. Membership of Zenkyōtō is open to all those resolved to struggle against university authority and against the unprincipled opportunism of the JCP. Committees were formed to see to the defence of each building and to thrash out the issues of each department. They were formed at the level of students, graduates, researchers and teaching assistants, and representatives of each base-level committee met together to work out co-ordinated action policies. Membership of Zenkyōtō meant simply joining the fight, and while political and ideological differences and discussions persisted they were not allowed to interfere with the tasks of joint defence and joint action.

### Struggles : State and Private Universities

This new, perhaps in the Japanese context radically new, kind of organization emerged in the course of struggles at Tokyo and Nihon universities. The former, at the *Alma Mater* of the nation's elite, developed from the January 1968 protests over the feudal and exploitative conditions under which medical graduates served a one year unpaid compulsory hospital internship, through the now familiar stages of occupation, unyielding stand by the authorities, bust by riot police, to a massive expansion which in the end paralysed the entire

university for a year. The latter developed with similar momentum (indeed as the universities are physically close their development was complementary) in the huge and corrupt private Nihon university after students found that the university authorities had embezzled 2 million pounds of university funds. The university president, a close friend of Premier Satō, had been using the money to build himself a mansion, to buy gifts for university officials, and for donations to the coffers of the ruling Liberal-Democratic party. The student enrolment was 100,000, the university had long been known as Nihon University Co. Ltd., because of the way it was run. Bribery was an accepted part of the business of entry into and passage through the university, and rule by physical violence, mediated on behalf of the administration by the athletic club, had crushed any attempt at political organization before 1968. Where Tokyo University graduates traditionally had gone with easy entrée to the top levels of the government, bureaucracy and business, those from Nihon, an inferior product or sort of intellectual proletariat, had gone on to staff the major companies with 'salary men' and the bureaucracy with lower level functionaries.<sup>12</sup> Traditional repressive methods failed to contain the uprising of 1968 however, where upwards of 20,000 students took part in occupations and fought together against the commando raids by the judo, karate and physical education squads brought in from outside to supplement the local groups of thugs.

The disputes of Tokyo and Nihon universities, mentioned here briefly, are in a sense representative of the problems of Japanese universities in the years 1968-69. Some of the issues elsewhere were—control of a student hall (notably Waseda), drastic fee increases (Keiō, Meiji, Tokyo Women's), or the poor, mass-production quality of the education in others.<sup>13</sup> The major distinction is between state and private universities. There are nearly 400 private universities in Japan, often with enrolments of 50,000-100,000, where fees are usually over 200 pounds, education always inferior to the state-run, low-fee (12-15 pounds a year) elite universities,<sup>14</sup> and where certain characteristics are almost universal—emphasis on the spirit of the founder, which seems never to have been interred with his bones, promotion of a college song and flag and existence of a college mafia. Thus the initial issue in private universities tended to be more concrete—fee increases, overcrowding, control of student facilities, demand for free speech rights, while in state universities fees were low anyway, the quality of education much superior and free speech more or less assured; so protests were more likely to be explicitly ideological, or to develop quickly, as in Tokyo

<sup>12</sup> 'Salary-man' is now the Japanese word for the white-collar, semi-professional, company worker, who is almost invariably a university graduate.

<sup>13</sup> Kyushu University, where the trouble was sparked off by the crashing of an American jet from a nearby base into the university computer centre, must rank as a special case.

<sup>14</sup> There is also an elite within this elite, in that Tokyo and Kyoto universities, while taking a third of the budget allocated to the 75 national universities, account for only 10 per cent of their total students, while Tokyo's law faculty alone produced over half of the present government's senior ministers. The private universities attended by three-quarters of Japan's students get less than one-half of the money spent by the state on higher education. (From the recently released OECD report as quoted in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, No. 48, November 28th, 1970, p. 27.)

University, into an attack on the university itself as a bastion of privilege and lynchpin of an oppressive, reactionary system.

### A Special Case: Takushoku University

The most recent case of a university dispute concerns Takushoku (literally 'colonization') University, so known because of the imperial role it served in pre-war days. There, on June 15th, 1970, a student was beaten to death by leading members of the university's Takuninkai, or Karate society, as punishment for attempting to leave the society and break free of its oppressive routines. The President of the University, who happened to be the present government's whizz-kid Defence Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, tried to calm the issue by going at once to the parents of the dead boy to offer a solatium of about 6,000 pounds and expressing regret at the unfortunate incident. However the students suddenly rose in rebellion, the *Ashai* newspaper took up the case and a remarkable picture began to emerge of the nature of Takushoku, a picture deserving of especial attention for what may be learnt from it of the mentality of Nakasone, a man tipped by many as a future Prime Minister, and the man who presides over Takushoku. Administrative functions within the university are concentrated in the hands of the Reitakukai, of which Nakasone is the President and whose membership comprises staff, graduates and students in appropriate proportions organized into three bureaus—cultural, general affairs and physical education. The group responsible for the lynching, the Takuninkai, is the karate division of the Physical Education Bureau. Political organizations have always been forbidden at Takushoku, and the prescription enforced by strong-arm squads from the various martial arts groups supported and promoted by the university. Members of such groups are incidentally easily recognizable by their close-cropped hair, high military collars, bell-bottomed trousers and high *geta* or wooden clogs. Their activities have included not only beatings and intimidation of any would-be political activists at Takushoku but also collaboration, as a sort of police auxiliary, in violent assaults on the barricaded students at Nihon and other universities. While all other thought is proscribed at Takushoku, the official ideology is set out in regular monthly lectures to the general assembly of students given by President Nakasone. Subjects of these discourses range over the need to build up and strengthen the nation's defence system, the need to strengthen the existing defence treaty relationship with the United States, the unwisdom of Japan's signing the Nuclear Non-dissemination Treaty, the need to defend and promote the virtues of patriotism and nationalism as seen in the lives of past heroes such as the Meiji Emperor or Admiral Nogi, the need to preserve Takushoku free from the subversive influences of communist and radical activities such as have bedevilled other campuses. One lecture subject is reported to have been 'The establishment of International Bushido'. Prominent Liberal-Democratic party figures often accompany Nakasone to the platform for these meetings. Furthermore, the hierarchical principle is cultivated in the student dormitories by observance of the rule that juniors should sit in respectful silence while seniors eat their fill at meals and only then take what remains. Graduates of the university, which has a current enrolment of 10,000, from its foundation in 1900 played an important role, as suggested by the name,



in Japan's overseas territories—initially Taiwan, then other colonial areas, and now especially in South East Asia.

Nakasone's little empire was, however, severely shaken by the upheaval which broke out over the death of freshman Anjo. Old constraints were seen as integral parts of the system that killed Anjo and to be no longer tolerable. By June 22nd, a week after Anjo's death, the mass student assembly had thrown out the Takuninkai-controlled 'self-governing committees' and elected a quite new platform of representatives pronouncing themselves for the various factions of the Left. This popular insurgence was too much for Nakasone who declared the campus closed under police guard on grounds of continuing disturbances—actually brought on by the desperate resistance to change of the athletes he supported—and refused at the same time to recognize the elections by which the athletes had been formally rejected by the mass of students. Months later, in the autumn, Takushoku was reopened for classes, but with the barricades still in place, and admission given only to those students prepared to sign a kind of 'oath of allegiance' by which they pledged their support to the authorities of the university and promised to cause no trouble. Radicals remain thus effectively excluded. Nakasone seems to have been eased from direct involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the university by the appointment of two new officers, a Dean of Students and a President of the Board of Trustees, but, though it is still early to say, it seems likely this spells an effort to clear his reputation and protect his political future rather than to introduce any substantial changes in the organization of the university. The scandal did force Nakasone to drop from the public eye for a while but this now seems to be past, his standing in the government unimpaired and his reputation as the brilliant mind of the Satō Cabinet and future Premier unaffected.

### Present Perspectives and Problems

Partly this can be so because the issue of Takushoku arose at a time when in retrospect the initiative of the university-based struggle had shifted away from the students and to the authorities, both university and riot police, throughout Japan, perhaps bringing to an end a period of extraordinary militancy which has borne a remarkable parallel to that in the USA and lasted from 1965 to 1970. It began with the massive struggles against the Japan-Korea Normalization Treaty of 1965, and almost simultaneously with the eruption of Waseda university's first occupations and closures, reached a climax between the autumn of 1967 (the first Haneda struggles, attempts to stop Prime Minister Satō from leaving to visit the heads of the Saigon and other South East Asian governments) and autumn 1969 (the anti-war day upheavals in October and the November struggles in which the avowed aim of many was a rising by 100,000 armed students which would spark off demonstrations by a million in Tokyo and would lead to seizure of the airport to prevent Satō's leaving—this time for the USA—followed by the overwhelming of the administrative centres, and by the revolution).

From the end of this struggle, which at least in these terms was not successful, till the summer of 1970 there has been a tapering off in

militant mass activity, though it may be that the us pattern will be followed here too and that small urban guerrilla and sabotage kinds of activity will replace the large confrontations of the past few years. Planning by several of the political groups—Red Army, Keihin Anti-war Army etc—suggests this kind of development.

Some of the reasons for the tapering off of broadly based militant activity deserve consideration here, however. Generally they may be put down as repression, fatigue and disillusionment. The massive build-up of the riot police is the most conspicuous factor, and the arrests and long imprisonments of militants that have followed each major confrontation have taken an undoubted toll. All the university bases have been crushed, occupations and strikes crushed, a university 'normalization' law passed to facilitate government direct intervention in university disputes, and a highly efficient police intelligence network has allowed preemptive strikes too often to be successful in forestalling plans. Public reaction to the constant summoning of riot police and their presence on and around university campuses has turned from shock and indignation in January 1969 to indifference as it becomes more customary and as the middle classes are lulled into ever deeper stupefaction by the flow of consumer baubles and colour tvs, by the rising GNP (bread) and Expo (the circus). The next factor is undoubtedly fatigue. In 1968 the Tokyo University May Festival keynote was set by an untranslatable student verse whose import, roughly, was that rebellion was the clear duty of students and would not be gainsaid. In 1970 the verse had changed to one meaning roughly 'Please, a bit of peace and quiet now. Take it easy. Let things be.' University President Katō now even ventures occasionally on to the campus where for long he has been in virtual hiding. Clearly fatigue has also played an important part in allowing the jcp students to swing the support of many moderates, anxious to resume classes, get their degrees and so on, behind their reformist demands of democratization and participation, and so helped smash the strikes. In the universities nothing changes, Committees are set up and reports circulated, and then circulated again, but only the application of massive force has restored 'order'. One must wonder too whether the recent unpublicized visit to London of Education Minister Sakata might not bode ill for the future here. For, as many British officials might feel, may we not have a lot to learn from Japanese methods of solving their problems? Finally there is the disillusionment arising from the recognition that in 1969 the revolutionary upheavals planned and expected simply did not materialize and therefore past analysis has somewhere been seriously at fault. The anti-Security Treaty struggles of June 1970, though involving masses of people, were in essence a charade, played out by the Left because of a ten-year-long commitment to action, but emptied of any real hope of success, and with the feeling rather that the real work of organizing, thinking and planning must begin again. For the moment students are on the defensive, in a situation likened by some to the low days of 1952 when the jcp-organized abortive armed uprising had just been disastrously crushed. The organizational forms developed in the past few years, Zenkyōtō for the students, the Citizens' Peace in Vietnam Committee, the workers' Anti-war Youth Committee, may continue and develop further, but somehow a new way must be found to expand the

basis of the struggle. Perhaps it will be by relating directly to the most oppressed of the Japanese masses, the two million or so ex-untouchable *Etas*, the half million or so almost as severely discriminated against Korean minority, or the fifty million or so still thoroughly dominated and exploited women; perhaps by expanding and politically organizing the present tremendous concern over the destruction of the environment; perhaps in consequence of some at present unforeseen crisis developing in the economy, or by the government trying to push too far too fast in the remilitarization of Japan and its reorganization in the interests of monopoly capital. How the present crisis will be resolved is impossible to say. That it must be resolved is clear.

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## Mishima

Jon Halliday

Mishima's death provides an excellent and salutary occasion to look at two important phenomena: the nature of Zen culture in Japan, and the condition of the Japanese army.

Mishima was one of the main vectors of Zen culture to the West, and to the American beatniks primarily: through books like *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (probably his most widely read work in the West), he was influential on a whole generation of writers, headed by Kerouac. Since Kerouac ended up supporting Ronald Reagan and Goldwater, and Mishima died urging the Japanese army to greater violence and aggression, the connection deserves scrutiny.

It is rarely stressed in mystified Western writing on Japan that Zen was introduced from China as an essentially aristocratic and militaristic culture—in the late 12th century: 'Because of the powerful hold which it has held over the military classes of Japan, Zen is the form of Buddhism which has most affected Japanese ultra-nationalist philosophy. It is implicit in many of the concepts of self-denial and sacrifice for the Imperial Family which are basic to the theme of *Kokutai no Hongi*.'<sup>1</sup> Zen Buddhism has always appealed to the Japanese warrior class, and its centre was at Kamakura, the military capital, at the height of the period of the feudal wars. Zen, although a derivative of the original Buddhist

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<sup>1</sup> Robert King Hall, introduction to *Kokutai no Hongi*, Cambridge, Mass., 1949, p. 27; the *Kokutai no Hongi* (*Principles of National Policy*) was the basic pre-1945 text of political mystification and repression. On Zen and repression, see also D. C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, Chicago, 1947; Minoru Hashimoto, 'Zen Doctrine and Its Influence upon the Samurai Class,' *Cultural Nippon*, vol. VI, no. 1 (March 1958).

movement, was also most favourable to Confucianism, the other main repressive cultural strand in Japan.

Zen 'culture' was focused on a series of activities whose common characteristic is that they all involved a great deal of time—so much time that anyone who was working could not possibly indulge in them: they were confined to aristocrat warriors and monks. These were the various 'ways' (viz. to enlightenment), recognizable by the suffix *do*, as in aikido, judo, kendo, bushido, etc. All of these, from archery to karate, involved colossal expenditure of time, plus meditation—in other words demanded that the person not be working. As in all such cases, of course, this was not made explicit in its exclusive class form, but this is indeed how things stood.

With the upheavals in Japan in the middle of the last century, Zen, along with other cultural trends, was for a time thrown into a major crisis. At the time of the Meiji Restoration many of the most oppressive cultural institutions were swept away—and many of these were only reinstated by the new bourgeoisie, striving to forge an alliance with the aristocracy at the 'cultural' level. Thus it was that both the tea ceremony and No, which had become virtually extinct, were resuscitated by the new bourgeoisie—the tea ceremony being 're-vitalized' by an elite clique of 16 businessmen, the Wakeikai, or Harmonious Respect Society (who disguised themselves as Buddhist monks). Kendo (the way of the sword) almost died out, and was only kept alive by a small group in the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board. The absence of a bourgeois ideology led the bourgeoisie to latch on to aristocratic ideology during the stages of class imbrication. The founder of the Mitsui industrial combine, Nakagumigawa, called for a 'bushido of the chonin' (a 'way of the sword of the bourgeoisie'), just as Shibusawa Eiichi, a peasant who became a leading Meiji banker, pronounced that 'the spirit of a modern businessman should be Bushido.'

Western studies of Japan have, on the whole, failed to disentangle this complicated mixture—just as the Meiji ruling class failed to extricate Shinto from Buddhism. Mishima, more than any other figure in modern Japan, represented the contradictions of the specifically cultural legacy: a certain sensitivity, openness to modern and foreign ideas, combined with the militaristic repressiveness and violence of Zen. This repressiveness also emerges clearly in Zen's incredibly pernicious influence on Japanese psychology, where the *mondo* (brief, authoritarian dialogue between master and disciple) has spawned a whole school of disturbing pseudo-psychiatry.<sup>2</sup> And the main purveyor of Zen culture to the West, Suzuki Daisetsu, was one of the members of premier Yoshida's Education Council, set up in 1950 to prepare the reactionary rollback in education, presided over by Minister of Education, Amano Teiyu, who produced a 'Code of National Conduct' designed to help dragoon the

<sup>2</sup> The main influences have inevitably been figures like Krapelin; but 'Zen psychiatry' has also been important; see Akihisa Kondo, 'Morita Therapy: A Japanese Therapy for Neurosis,' *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 13 (1953); cf. Franz Alexander, 'Buddhist Training as an artificial catatonia,' *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 18 (1931), which I have not been able to consult.

Japanese back to mass subservience. Suzuki, unwisely endorsed by Jung, has had an undeservedly large audience in the West for someone whose nearest homologue is Billy Graham, minus the histrionic demagoguery.<sup>3</sup>

However, all this does not suffice to explain the immediate act by Mishima. The first point to stress about this is that Mishima was aiming at a very real contradiction: the contradiction between appearance (official lies) and reality in Japanese military affairs. The comparison with the 1930's is really wrong. At that time the army was strong, and was seen to be strong.

At present, the Japanese army is once again strong, but living a kind of double life. The post-war Constitution banned Japan from having armed forces, or engaging in war in any form. Japan now has what are estimated to be the seventh largest armed forces in the world, but the Japanese ruling class has not yet managed to overcome *explicitly* the imposed post-war restrictions. It has, instead, managed to circumvent them *de facto* with startling efficiency. It is often stressed in the West that Japan has a relatively low defence budget—but it is less rarely emphasized that it has *the fastest growing* one among the major powers: the 1970 defence budget was up 17.7 per cent over that of 1969—and, as is well known, it is rate of growth that is the critical factor in assessing a moving, dynamic situation. It is no good writing off the threat from the Japanese military in the way a paper like *The Times* did recently (editorial on China: 'Japan's Suspicious Neighbour' November 4th, 1970). The Sato-Nixon arrangement of late 1969 expanded Japan's 'sphere of influence' to both Taiwan and Korea;<sup>4</sup> the recent White Paper (October 1970) states that Japan *could* possess nuclear weapons. The Minister of Defence, Nakasone (v. Gavan McCormack's article) has stated that Japan has no intention of acquiring such weapons. But there is absolutely no reason to believe Nakasone. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (March 12th, 1970) reports General Genda, chairman of the National Defence Committee of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (and one of the planners of the attack on Pearl Harbour), as follows: 'The government should not speak about its three basic anti-atom-bomb policies . . . (it should say): 'We do not have atomic weapons now, but we will have them whenever we feel it is necessary.' It should not say: 'We will never attack . . . There are nine innings and each innings has two sides, attack and defence. If there were only defence and no attack, none of the spectators would come to see the game.'

Mishima's outburst did not come at an 'accidental' time. It came immediately after a very important victory for the Right: the success of Nakasone and his group in the LDP in imposing their long-term plan for Japanese re-armament over the older members of the LDP, headed by Kaibara Hiroshi, who basically wanted to maintain the present,

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<sup>3</sup> See Jung's introduction to Suzuki's *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, London, 1959. Yoshida records his appreciation of Suzuki's reactionary role in *The Yoshida Memoirs*, London, 1961, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> It actually states that Korea 'is essential to the security of Japan'. Nakasone has called Korea Japan's 'advance stronghold'.

convenient position of *relative* subordination to the us. Nakasone's victory was sealed with the White Paper in October 1970.<sup>5</sup> Mishima apparently wanted to use this success to push the army further and faster to the right, towards 'independence'. His own small private army had been trained by the Japanese army (GSDF) and Mishima was a friend of General Mashita, the commander of Japan's Eastern Defence Forces, whose office he invaded. It is quite unscientific to see Mishima as separate from the 'established' military: the GSDF was *actively* complicit with Mishima's actions, by providing him with training facilities, etc—and there is therefore no reason to assume that he was anything but *marginally* to the right of part of the army. His 'invasion' of General Mashita's office, and the harangue to the troops, was in the style of Japanese 'hustling'. Moreover, the fact that he didn't get anywhere there and then means little: on the one hand, he has laid a heavy burden on the army by committing *seppuku* on its premises; on the other hand, his act can always be used by right-wing military to justify further moves against the Constitution, already outlined in the Nakasone draft. If Mishima's gesture was designed to provoke the Japanese army into realizing what it should be doing, the gesture should provoke *us* into realizing what the Japanese army actually *is*: a large, heavily armed force, led by Pacific War veterans, predominantly right-wing, with an announced stake in Taiwan and Korea. If China is 'Japan's suspicious neighbour', she has every right to be. Mishima may have been a fool, but he was not, as premier Satō claimed, 'mad': only slightly prematurely out of line. The Japanese army was never smashed, and shows every sign of rising again.

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<sup>5</sup> Nakasone has apparently touched successfully on the pervasive nerve of nationalism in Japan. It is well to recall that this is not exclusively right-wing. Hatoyama, premier in the mid-fifties, fought for a military policy very similar to that of Nakasone, but also normalized relations with the ussr, and tried to promote better relations with China. Mishima, it should be remembered, was active in the 1960 demonstrations against the renewal of the us-Japan Security Treaty, and as late as 1965 some of the left-wing students were still negotiating with him as a potential ally in the struggle against us imperialism.

## Introduction to *Mao Tse-tung's letter to Lin Piao*

This letter is best known in the abbreviated and partially altered version included under the heading 'A Single Spark can Start a Prairie Fire' in the editions of Mao's writings published at Peking since 1951. It was written at Kut'ien, Fukien Province, where the Ninth Party Congress of the Fourth Red Army had adopted a few days previously Mao's long and programmatic resolution—part of which is in the *Selected Works* (Vol. I) as 'On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party'—on the ideology, style and organization of the Red Army. This meeting, which took place in one of the safer base areas, was the last of a series held over three years in the Fourth Army, the kernel of the Red forces, and has, with justice, been regarded in China during recent decades as an historic ideological rectification movement that set the Maoist style for the Red Army and its successors.

Lin Piao, at the time a brilliant young soldier of about 22 who commanded one of the Fourth Army's regiments, has not been reported as having attended the conference; and if he had been there Mao would not have written to him. His presumed absence can be attributed to military duties. It would be wrong to make too much of the criticism of Lin contained here; a few months later he was given the command of the Fourth Army, which could hardly have been done without Mao's approval. The criticism is friendly, almost avuncular, in tone; and for Mao to express his thoughts on revolutionary policy to a junior colleague in a private letter suggests that he must indeed have had confidence in Lin.

The historical background to this letter is covered in the Ch'en and Schram biographies of Mao, in Snow's *Red Star over China*, Agnes Smedley's *The Great Road*, Schwartz's *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Rue's *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition* and in various pieces in Mao's writings. The story is a complicated one yet to be clearly told—other problems aside, the surviving documentation is very thin—but in essence, the main participants within the Communist movement were the various rural-based armed forces led by Mao Tse-tung, Chu Te and others, the primarily urban-oriented Central Committee, based in Shanghai, and the Comintern leadership in Moscow, whose frequent directives to China had a powerful influence on policy-making. As Mao's letter shows, there were frequent differences between the fighting revolutionaries and the Central Committee, as well as within the ranks of the Red Army. On the other side, the chimerical unity achieved by Chiang Kai-shek was breaking down in a series of civil wars between the leading war-lord factions, conflicts that Mao had anticipated in 1928 and 1929. As they developed, together with the global crisis of capitalism, the Central Committee, dominated by Li Li-san, swung from an

exaggerated caution to extreme optimism. Later in 1930, the Red Army was to be thrown by Li into a wild and near-disastrous attempt to storm the great cities of Central China, a move intended to set off a nation-wide revolutionary upsurge; but Mao does not seem to have been aware of this coming policy-change at the time he wrote this letter. Whether his proposed plan to take the whole of Kiangsi would have been more successful than Li's more grandiose scheme is a matter for speculation—but it could not have been any more unfortunate, and it was not based on the same mistaken assumption that the workers of China and the world would rise in support.

As an annotated translation of the abridged version 'A Single Spark can Start a Prairie Fire', is readily available in Volume One of Mao's *Selected Works* and elsewhere, I have not reproduced the notes to be found there or indicated in detail where the changes have been made. Mainly they consist in omitting passages at the beginning and the end, and making references to Lin Piao into vague general statements about 'some people', 'some comrades' and so on. The text I have translated below is from the *Supplement* to the 1947 Chin-Ch'a-Chi edition of Mao's Hsüan-Chi (*Selected Works*). Some parts of it have already been included in Schram's *Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*. 'Subjective' and 'objective' as used in this letter refer to the revolution and the counter-revolution respectively, a usage that Mao was later to drop.

Bill Jenner

# MAX BELOFF

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## Letter to Comrade Lin Piao from Mao Tse-tung January 5th 1930

Comrade Lin Piao:

I have not yet replied to your letter although it is several days since New Year. One reason is that several things have kept me busy, and another is that I have been wondering what to write to you. What have I to offer you that is really good? I have racked my tired brain but found nothing suitable, which is why I have been putting it off. Now I believe I have thought of something. I don't know whether it applies exactly to your situation, but what I have to say is indeed about an important problem in the present struggle. Even if it does not correspond exactly with your particular circumstances, it is a vital general problem, and that is why I am bringing it up.

The question I want to raise is the problem of how to evaluate the present situation and what actions of ours must follow from this. I felt before, and to some extent still feel, that your estimate of the situation is rather pessimistic. This view of yours was made very clear at the meeting on the evening of May 18th last year in Juichin. I know you believed that the coming of the

revolutionary high tide is inevitable, but you did not believe that it could possibly come quickly. So, when it came to action, you did not agree with the plan to take Kiangsi in a single year and only approved of guerrilla fighting in three districts in Fukien-Kwangtung-Kiangsi border regions. At the same time you had no profound belief in setting up Red political power in the three districts, or in deepening and expanding this Red political power to hasten a nationwide revolutionary high tide. To judge by your belief in (\* \* \*)-style<sup>1</sup> mobile guerrilla policies, you seem to think that in a period when the revolutionary high tide is still far off it is a waste of effort to do the arduous work of establishing political power. You would prefer using the more convenient mobile guerrilla methods to extend our political influence, waiting until we have succeeded in winning over the masses throughout the country, or have gone some way in that direction, before launching a nationwide insurrection that, with the strength of the Red Army added to it, will be a great nationwide revolution.

I do not think that your theory of establishing political power on a nationwide scale everywhere, having won over the masses first, is applicable to the Chinese revolution. In my view this theory of yours arises from a failure to see clearly that China is a semi-colony competed for by several imperialisms in their final stages. If you recognized that China is a semi-colony competed for by imperialisms in their final stages, you would understand first why it is that China alone in the whole world shows the strange phenomenon of ruling classes locked in chaotic wars among themselves, why it is that the fighting is fiercer and more widespread with each passing day, and why there can never be unified state power. Second, you would appreciate the grave importance of the peasant question and thus also realize why rural uprisings have developed on their present national scale. Third, you would understand the absolute correctness of the slogan of worker-peasant political power. Fourth, you would comprehend why China is the only country in the world in which the strange phenomenon of ruling classes locked in complicated wars among themselves has given birth to another oddity: the existence and growth of a Red Army and guerrilla units, and, as a consequence, the existence and growth of small areas of Red political power (soviets) that have appeared in the midst of White political power. So strange a thing as this is not to be found outside China. Fifth, you would understand that the Red Army, the guerillas and the Soviet districts are both the highest form of peasant struggle in a semi-colony and the form towards which such struggles must move. Sixth, you would see that these (the Red Army and peasant soviets) are beyond any doubt the most important force allied to the proletarian struggle in a semi-colony—the proletariat must step forward to lead it—and that this is an important factor hastening the coming of the nationwide revolutionary high tide. Seventh, you would realize that a policy of fighting purely in a roving guerrilla way cannot fulfill the task of hastening a nationwide revolutionary high tide. You would also see the undoubted correctness of the policies of the Chu-Mao, Ho Lung, Li Wen-lin and Fang Chih-min sort, policies

<sup>1</sup>It is not immediately obvious who \* \* \* of the 1947 text might be, but one possible candidate would be P'eng Te-hual.

of developing our political power through wave-like expansion. This involves: the planned establishment of political power in base areas; the Red Army and the guerrillas on the one hand and the great mass of the peasantry, on the other being closely co-ordinated and organized, and being trained through combat; an intensified agrarian revolution; and the expansion of the military organization from forces involved in rural uprisings through district Red Guard battalions, county Red Guard regiments and local Red Army units to Red Army units that can operate anywhere. This is the only way in which we can build the confidence of the revolutionary masses throughout the country, in the way Soviet Russia has done for the whole world. This is the only way to cause extreme difficulties for the ruling classes, rock their foundations, and hasten their internal disintegration. It is also the only way of really creating a Red Army that will be one of the most important tools in the great revolution that is to come. It is, in short, the only way of hastening the revolutionary high tide.

I would like to talk next about what I feel are the reasons for your rather pessimistic evaluation of the present situation, which I regard as the exact opposite of the evaluation made by the Party's revolutionary hot-heads. The comrades who suffer from revolutionary hot-headedness overestimate subjective forces and underestimate objective ones. Such evaluations spring largely from an idealist viewpoint and must result, beyond any doubt, in wanting to take a mistaken adventurist course. You have not made this mistake; your shortcomings seem to have been in the other direction—tending to underestimate subjective forces and overestimate objective ones. This incorrect evaluation gives rise to bad results of the opposite sort. You see the weakness of subjective forces and the strength of objective ones, but do not recognize the following vital points:

1. Although the subjective forces of the Chinese revolution are weak, all the organizations of the ruling classes (political power, armed forces, parties, other organizations, etc) which are based on China's fragile socio-economic organizations, are also weak. This explains why it is that, although the subjective revolutionary forces of Western European countries are far stronger than those of China, they are unable to unleash revolutions at once: their ruling classes are many times stronger than the Chinese ones. Although the subjective strength of the Chinese revolution is weak, it is bound to reach a high tide sooner than Western Europe because the objective forces are also weak.

2. After the defeat of the Great Revolution the subjective revolutionary forces were indeed enormously weakened. The revolutionary forces that have survived are so tiny in appearance that they naturally give pessimistic ideas to the comrades who see things that way; but if one looks at their real nature they are very different. In the words of an old Chinese saying, 'A single spark can start a prairie fire'. This is to say that, although our forces are tiny at present, they are developing fast. In the Chinese environment not only can they develop, they are bound to develop, as was thoroughly proved in the May 30th Movement and the Great Revolutionary Movement that followed. In looking at things we must look at their real nature, taking their form only as a guide to lead

us inside. Once inside we must grasp their real nature and cast aside the form that guided us there. This is the only scientific, reliable and revolutionary method of analysis.

3. The same applies to the evaluation of objective forces: we must see their real nature as well as their form. When we first set up a base in the Hunan-Kiangsi border a few comrades, influenced by the incorrect evaluation of the Hunan Provincial Party Committee of the time, really believed the Provincial Committee and thought that the enemy was utterly hopeless. The two phrases now passed around as jokes—'thoroughly shaky' and 'utterly panic-stricken'—were terms used at the time (May and June 1928) by the Committee in evaluating Li Ti-p'ing, the ruler of Hunan. Such an evaluation was bound to lead to political adventurism. But in the four months or so from November 1928 to February of last year, when the third and biggest annihilation campaign threatened Ching kangshan, some comrades began to wonder how long the Red Flag could go on flying. In fact, at that time the struggle between Britain, the USA and Japan in China had come right out into the open, and the pattern of tangled warfare between Chiang Kai-shek, the Kwangsi warlords and Feng Yu-hsiang had already been set. The counter-revolutionary tide was beginning to ebb and the revolutionary one to rise. But at that time pessimism was not to be found in the Red Army and the local Party alone; the Central Committee itself, bemused by formal objective reality, started to talk along pessimistic lines. The Central Committee's letter of February 7th is evidence of pessimistic analysis inside the Party at that time.

4. Present objective circumstances can still easily mislead comrades who study form rather than reality. Our comrades working in the Red Army are especially liable, when they have been defeated or surrounded or are being pursued by a powerful enemy, unconsciously to generalize and extend their own temporary and particular little environment, so that it seems impossible to be optimistic about China or the world as a whole, and the future for the revolution looks very bleak. This way of looking, that ignores the real nature, is the reason why they have not yet scientifically understood the real nature of the situation as a whole. If one asks whether a revolutionary high tide is imminent in China, the answer can only be found by making a detailed investigation into whether the contradictions, that will bring on the high tide, are developing or not. We must see correctly that the international contradictions between imperialisms, between imperialisms and the colonies, and between imperialism and the proletariat have all developed. Imperialism consequently needs more urgently than ever to struggle for China. As this struggle becomes more intense the contradictions between imperialism and China as a whole, and among the imperialists themselves, develop within China's boundaries at the same time; consequently there arise within China's ruling classes chaotic wars that spread and intensify with every passing day, while the contradictions among them grow. The merciless increase in taxation caused by the wars between warlords—wars arising from contradictions among the rulers—hastens the daily growth of the contradiction between the taxpayers and the rulers. The failure of the Chinese bourgeoisie to win concessions from imperialism, a consequence of the contradiction

between imperialism and Chinese capitalism, has resulted in the immediate development of a contradiction between the Chinese bourgeoisie and the Chinese working class because the Chinese bourgeoisie has to intensify its exploitation of the working class. The contradiction with the landlord class that accompanies the invasion by imperialist commodities, the attrition by commercial capital, and the increase in the tax burden, intensifies the contradiction between the landlord class and the peasantry as exploitation through land-rents and interest rates grows worse.

The declining purchasing power of the broad masses of workers and peasants and the increasing government taxation that are results of the pressure of foreign goods, drive dealers in Chinese goods and independent small producers further each day along the road to bankruptcy. Because of the unlimited increases in underfed and underpaid armies and of the ever-growing wars, the soldier masses endure every day the miseries of hunger, cold, casualties and flight. Because of the increases in national taxation and landlord rent and interest, as well as the ever-growing disasters of war, natural calamities and banditry have spread throughout the country, driving the mass of the peasantry and the urban poor to destitution. Students are having to end their studies because there is no money for running schools; and the backwardness of production means that graduates have no hope of employment.

If all these contradictions are recognized one can know why China is in a shaky, and hopeless and anarchic state. One can also know why a revolutionary high tide against imperialism, warlords and landlords is not just inevitable but even imminent. The whole of China is covered with dry tinder that will very rapidly burst into flame. 'A single spark starting a prairie fire' is a fitting description of the present state of affairs. One has only to look at the development of the situation across the country—workers' strikes, peasants' risings, soldiers' mutinies, merchants' market strikes and students' class strikes—to know that it is no longer just a single spark. Beyond any shadow of doubt the time of the prairie fire is close.

The gist of the above was expressed in the Front Committee's letter of April 5th last year to the Central Committee. That letter said:

"This letter from the Central Committee (the one of February 9th) is too pessimistic in its evaluation of the objective situation and subjective forces. The three attempts to wipe out Chingkangshan were the high tide of the counter-revolution, and it has now passed. From now on the counter-revolutionary tide will gradually ebb and the revolutionary tide will rise. Although the Party is as weak in combat and organizational power as the Central Committee says, it will very quickly revive as the counter-revolutionary tide ebbs, and the negative attitude of Party cadres will gradually disappear. The masses will certainly come over to us. The policy of slaughter is bound to drive them away, and reformism has no more appeal for them either. The masses' illusions about the Kuomintang cannot but be rapidly destroyed. In the coming situation no other party will be able to compete with the Communist

Party for the masses. The political and organizational lines of the Sixth Party Congress are utterly right: the current stage of the revolution is democratic, not socialist; and the present task of the Party is winning over the masses, not immediate armed uprisings. But the revolution develops very fast; there should be a positive spirit in propaganda and in preparations for armed uprisings. In the present great disorder it is only with positive slogans and a positive spirit that the masses can be led; and only with this positive spirit is the revival of the Party's fighting power possible. We feel that while the Party previously made the mistake of adventurism, it is now following a rather liquidationist tendency in some places. . . . Proletarian leadership is the sole key to the victory of the revolution, and the Party's biggest organizational task at present is the establishment of a proletarian base and the founding of industrial branches in the central districts. At the same time the development of the rural struggle, the founding of soviets in small districts, and the creation and expansion of Red Armies are also essential for helping the urban struggle and hastening the revolutionary high tide. Therefore to abandon the urban struggle and immerse oneself in rural guerrilla-ism would be the greatest mistake. However, we also think it a mistake if some Party members are afraid of the growth of peasant power because it might go beyond workers' leadership and be harmful to the revolution. In semi-colonial China the revolution can only fail if the peasant struggle is not led by the workers; the revolution cannot be harmed by the peasant struggle outstripping the power of the workers.

The letter had this answer on the question of the tactics and strategy of Red Army operations:

"The Central Committee wants us to split our forces into very small units and disperse them among the villages. Chu and Mao are to be separated from the army, and big targets are to be concealed, with the aim of preserving the Red Army and mobilizing the masses. This is just a dream. Two winters ago (in 1927) we planned and often tried using independently operating companies or battalions scattered among the villages, and using guerrilla tactics to mobilize the masses and avoid offering targets. It always failed. This was because: 1. The Red Army soldiers were mostly not local men and had different origins from the local Red Guards. 2. Dispersal meant that leading organs were weak so that when things turned bad we were unable to cope and were easily beaten. 3. It was easy for the enemy to smash (our units) one by one. 4. The worse things are the more one must concentrate one's forces and the firmer the leader must be in the struggle; only then can we be united among ourselves and deal with the enemy. Only when things are going well can we divide up the troops for guerrilla fighting, and only then is it less vital than in bad times that the leaders should stay with the troops. . . ."

What is wrong with this passage is that the reasons it gives for not dividing up the troops are all negative. This is not good enough. The positive reasons for concentrating the troops should be stated thus only when they are concentrated can stronger enemies be defeated and walled cities occupied. Only when stronger enemies have been beaten

and cities occupied can the masses be mobilized over a large area and political power be established over several counties. Only this can draw attention from far and near (which is what is meant by expanding our political influence) and have some practical effect in hastening the revolutionary high tide. The régimes we established on the Hunan-Kiangsi border the year before last and in western Fukien last year were both the result of the policy of concentrating military strength. This is a major principle. Does this mean that our troops should never be dispersed? No. The Front Committee's letter to the Central Committee included short-range dispersal of troops in Red Army guerrilla tactics. In essence, it was:

'The tactics we have derived from the struggles of the past three years are indeed different from any other tactics of ancient and modern times in China or abroad. With our tactics the struggle of the masses expands every day and no enemy, however powerful, can do anything about us. Our tactics are guerrilla tactics, and can be summed up thus:

'Disperse the troops to mobilize the masses; concentrate them to deal with the enemy.

'When the enemy advances, we retreat.

'When the enemy camps we harass. When the enemy is tired we attack.  
'When the enemy retreats we pursue.

Form stable base areas and adopt a policy of wave-like expansion. When pursued by a powerful enemy adopt a policy of fighting round and round in circles.

'Mobilize as many of the masses as possible in the shortest time by the best methods.

'These tactics are like using a net that can be spread or hauled in at any time. You spread it to win over the masses and close it to deal with the enemy. We have used these tactics for the last three years.'

'Spreading' here means over a short distance, as when the 29th and 31st Regiments dispersed their men inside Yunghsin county during the first attack on Yunghsin on the Hunan-Kiangsi border; or when the 28th Regiment went to the borders of Anfu, the 29th to Lienhau, and the 31st to the borders of Kian to disperse during the third attack on Yunghsin; or when we scattered our troops throughout the counties of southern Kiangsi last April and May and throughout the counties of western Fukien last July. All these are good examples. Wide dispersal of troops is possible only in more favourable circumstances and with fairly strong leading organs. The aims of troop dispersal are to make it easier to win over the masses, to deepen the agrarian revolution, to establish political power, and to expand the Red Army and local armed forces. Rather than fail in these aims or even meet with defeat when we disperse our troops, thus weakening the power of the Red Army—as when we scattered our troops on the Hunan-Kiangsi border for the attack on Ch'en-chou last August—it is better not to disperse them. But,

given the two conditions mentioned above, we should undoubtedly disperse our troops, because dispersal is then more advantageous than concentration. I am opposed on principle to dispersing troops when circumstances are critical in order to preserve our strength and avoid presenting a concentrated target, as is explained in a passage of the Front Committee's letter to the Central Committee quoted above. Apart from this, will there be times in future when the economic situation will not permit concentration, obliging us to disperse our troops to work? Perhaps it could happen, but as I have no actual experience of such a situation I cannot give a definite judgment.

The spirit of the Central Committee's February 7th letter was bad. The letter has had a bad influence on a few Party comrades in the Fourth Army, yourself apparently included. A Central Committee notice at that time said that war between Chiang Kai-shek and the Kwangsi warlords was not inevitable. But since then the Central Committee's evaluations and directives have in general been completely right, and they have issued another notice to correct the one that estimated wrongly (only part of it, in fact). Although there has been no formal correction of what the letter had to say about the Red Army, their directives since then have been completely free of that pessimistic spirit, and their proposals on Red Army actions are completely in accord with those of the Front Committee. Yet the Central Committee's letter still has a bad influence on some comrades. Although the Front Committee's reply was published within the Party at the same time as the Central Committee's letter, it does not seem to have had any great influence on these comrades, because the Central Committee's letter was just to their taste; whereas these comrades have either paid no attention to the many later Central Committee directives correctly evaluating the situation, or when they have paid attention to them, they have not been able to wash away the earlier impression. Therefore I feel that we still need to explain this problem.

As for the plan to take Kiangsi in one year, this was proposed by the Front Committee to the Central Committee last April, and another decision on it was later taken at Yütu. The reasons were given at the time in the letter to the Central Committee thus:

'Chiang Kai-shek and Kwangsi troops are pressing close on each other in the Kiukiang region, and major fighting will break out at any moment. When this happens Kuomintang rule will disintegrate and the revolutionary high tide will soon be here. When making our arrangements in these circumstances we feel that, of the southern provinces, compradore-landlord military power is too strong in Kwangtung and Hunan. In Hunan in particular, the mistake of the Party's adventurist policies meant that the masses inside and outside the Party have almost all been lost. The situation is different in Fukien, Kiangsi and Chekiang.) In the first place, these three provinces are the weakest militarily. Chekiang has only got the small provincial defence force of Chiang Po-ch'eng. Although the five different armies in Fukien have fourteen regiments, the Kuo brigade has already been smashed, the troops of Ch'en and Lu are both bandit armies with very little combat power; and the two brigades of marines have never seen action so their combat



power is bound to be low. Chang Chen's men are the only reasonably capable fighters, but according to the Fukien Provincial Committee's analysis he only has two regiments that are good. At present there is complete anarchy and disunity. As for Kiangsi, the sixteen regiments in the armies of Chu P'ei-te and of Hsiung Shih-hui are stronger than those of Fukien and Chekiang, but much weaker than Hunan. Secondly, rather few adventurist mistakes have been committed in these three provinces. Leaving aside Chekiang, where we are not very well informed on the situation, the Party and mass foundations in Kiangsi and Fukien are much better than in Hunan. In Kiangsi we still have quite good foundations in Tean, Hsinshui and T'ungku in the north; in the west the Party and Red Guards are still powerful in Ningkan, Yunghsin, Lienhua and Suich'uan; in the south things are even more hopeful—in Kian, Yunghsin and Hsingkuo the 2nd and 4th Regiments of the Red Army are growing daily; and Fang Chih-min's Red Army has not been wiped out. This means that we have achieved the encirclement of Nanch'ang. We proposed to the Central Committee that during the prolonged warfare of the Kuomintang warlords, we should compete with the Chiang Kai-shek and the Kwangsi cliques for Kiangsi, including at the same time western Fukien and western Chekiang. In these three provinces the Red Army should be expanded in numbers and we should have mass bases. This plan should be completed in one year. The foundations of proletarian struggle must be established in Shanghai, Wusih, Ningpo, Hangchow, Foochow, Amoy and elsewhere in order to lead the peasant struggle in Chekiang, Kiangsi and Fukien. The Kiangsi Provincial Committee must be strong, and there must be strenuous efforts to establish foundations among workers and employees in Nanch'ang, Kiukiang, Kian and the Nanch'ang-Kiukiang Railway.'

What was wrong with the plan of taking Kiangsi in a year was mechanically setting the one year time-limit. Apart from conditions in Kiangsi itself, the taking of the provinces also signified, in my opinion, an imminent nationwide revolutionary high tide, because if one did not believe that the nationwide revolutionary high tide was imminent, one could not possibly come to the conclusion that Kiangsi should be taken in one year. The weakness of the proposal was in wrongly and mechanically specifying one year, which consequently affected just how 'imminent' the imminent revolutionary high tide was to be, and inevitably involved some mechanicism and impatience. But the reason why you believe that Kiangsi cannot be taken in one year is because you overestimate objective forces and underestimate subjective ones. This is why you do not believe that a revolutionary high tide can be imminent and why you reach this conclusion. Subjective and objective conditions in Kiangsi deserve much attention. Subjective conditions are still as they are described above and I have no new suggestions to add. On the objective conditions there are three points that should be clearly made. The first is that Kiangsi's economy is principally a feudal remnant one—one of exploitation through land rent. The commercial bourgeoisie has comparatively little power, while the landlord armed forces are stronger than those of any other southern province. Secondly, Kiangsi does not have its own provincial army; it has long been garrisoned by armies from other provinces. When armies from other

provinces came in to 'exterminate Communists' or 'exterminate bandits' they are not familiar with the situation, and as they are far less vitally concerned than troops from the same province, would be they are generally unenthusiastic about it. Thirdly, it is far enough from imperialist intervention to be rather less influenced by it, unlike Kwangtung, which, being next to Hong Kong, is under British control in almost every way. If we understand these three points we can explain why the rural uprisings in Kiangsi have been more widespread than in any other province, and why the Red Army and the guerrilla units are stronger there than in any other province.

This is just about all I have to reply to what you said. I have been long-winded and I'm sure I have said too much. But I feel that our discussion of the problem has been profitable, and that the problem in question has been correctly solved. This will have a really big influence on the Red Army's actions, which is why I have written this letter in very high spirits.

There are two last points that must be clarified. The first is how to understand 'imminent' in the 'imminent revolutionary high tide', a problem shared by very many comrades. Marxists are not fortune-tellers. They should and can only state the general direction of future developments and changes; they should not and cannot mechanically fix dates. But what I mean by the imminence of the Chinese revolutionary high tide is not at all like the empty thing, completely lacking in significance for action, that can be hoped for but not attained. It is a boat far out at sea, the tip of whose mast can already be seen far out in the ocean by an observer on the horizon. It is the morning sun, about to rise and cast its radiance all around, seen in the distance from the peak of a high mountain. It is a child, almost fully formed, stirring in its mother's womb. The second point is that, in saying that you want to spread our political influence through mobile guerrilla methods, I am not accusing you of having the purely military viewpoint or roving bandit ideology. You clearly have neither of these, which both involve no intention of winning over the masses; you advocate going all out to win over the masses—and besides advocating it, you actually do it. Where I disagree with you is in that you do not believe deeply in establishing political power, without which the tasks of winning over the masses and hastening the revolutionary high tide cannot be as successfully achieved as you imagine. This is the main thing I want to say in this letter.

Please correct me if I am wrong.

Mao Tse-tung  
Kut'ien, Shanghang

## Essence and Appearance: Aspects of Fetishism in Marx's *Capital*

'Vulgar economy . . . everywhere sticks to appearances in opposition to the law which regulates and explains them. In opposition to Spinoza, it believes that "ignorance is a sufficient reason"' (I, 307).<sup>1</sup> ' . . . Vulgar economy feels particularly at home in the estranged outward appearances of economic relations . . . these relations seem the more self-evident the more their internal relationships are concealed from it' (III, 797). ' . . . The philistine's and vulgar economist's way of looking at things stems . . . from the fact that it is only the direct form of manifestation of relations that is reflected in their brains and not their inner connection' (Marx to Engels, 27/6/1867). 'Once for all I may here state, that by classical Political Economy, I understand that economy which, since the time of W. Petty, has investigated the real relations of production in bourgeois society, in contradistinction to vulgar economy, which deals with appearances only' (I, 81). 'It is the great merit of classical economy to have destroyed this false appearance and illusion . . . this personification of things and conversion of production relations into entities, this religion of everyday life . . . nevertheless even the best

spokesmen of classical economy remain more or less in the grip of the world of illusion which their criticism had dissolved, as cannot be otherwise from a bourgeois standpoint, and thus they all fall more or less into inconsistencies, half-truths and unsolved contradictions' (III, 809).

In this manner does Marx, on many occasions, specify the distance separating vulgar economy from classical political economy, and *a fortiori* from his own critique of the latter, providing us at the same time with a conception of the minimum *necessary* condition to be satisfied by any work aspiring to scientific status: namely, that it uncovers the reality behind the appearance which conceals it. The intention of this article is to deal with a group of problems (in particular, the problem of fetishism) related to Marx's formulations of this requirement and to the systematic recurrence of its appropriate terminology—appearance/essence, form/content, illusion/reality, phenomena/hidden substratum, form of manifestation/inner connection, etc. It should, however, be made clear at the outset that scarcely anything is said about the development of Marx's views on these questions, hence about the relation between the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 and *Capital*; and, about the relationship between Hegel and Marx, nothing at all. Thus the process of Marx's intellectual formation and development is set to one side, and these problems are considered only as they emerge in *Capital* itself, at the interior of what is a more or less finished, more or less coherent structure of thought.

### The theoretical foundation of Capital

If we begin, then, with what I have called the minimum necessary condition of Marx's science, this methodological requirement to which he assigns an exceptional importance, the first question which arises is as follows: what is its theoretical foundation? What establishes its necessity? At all events, it is hardly an arbitrary construction on Marx's part. The text of *Capital* provides us with two kinds of answer. In one, it is revealed as the common requirement of *any* science.

'... a scientific analysis of competition is not possible before we have a conception of the inner nature of capital, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are not intelligible to any but him, who is acquainted with their real motions, motions which are not directly perceptible by the senses' (I, 316).

'That in their appearance things often represent themselves in inverted form is pretty well known in every science except Political Economy' (I, 537).

'... all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided' (III, 797).

In such passages Marx presents the conceptual distinction between :

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<sup>1</sup> References to *Capital* give the volume number (Roman) and the page number (Arabic) of the edition published by Lawrence and Wishart, London 1961-2. The letters of Marx and Engels can be found in the *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow n.d.).

appearance and reality as a form of *scientificity as such*, by notifying us that the method he is applying in political economy is simply a general requirement for arriving at valid knowledge, one which he has taken over from the other sciences where it has long been established. Taken on its own, this answer is not entirely satisfactory. It makes of Marx's primary methodological injunction—to shatter the obviousness of immediate appearances—an abstract procedural rule which must form part of the equipment of every science, regardless of the content of the science, of the nature of its object of study. Taken on its own, this answer does not yet specify why it is appropriate to extend the methods of astronomy to the subject matter of political economy. For this reason we put it in parenthesis for the moment, though it should be borne in mind since it will be reconsidered at a later stage of the argument.

We proceed to Marx's second answer which is of a different order altogether from the first. This answer is, of course, contained in the doctrine of fetishism. For the latter specifies those properties of Marx's object of study itself which imperiously demand that appearances be demolished if reality is to be correctly grasped. It analyses the mechanisms by which capitalist society necessarily appears to its agents as something other than it really is. The notion of fetishism raises quite complex problems, which will be developed presently, but even now it should be clear that we have in this second answer a theoretical foundation for the distinction, essence/appearance, and its variations, which was lacking in the first. The relation between methodological injunction and object of study is no longer one of externality, as is the case with an abstract rule applicable to any content whatsoever. It is, rather, what may be termed a *relation of adequacy* between object and method, the character of the latter being determined by the structure of the former. It is because there exists, at the interior of capitalist society, a kind of internal rupture between the social relations which obtain and the manner in which they are experienced, that the scientist of that society is confronted with the necessity of constructing reality against appearances. Thus, this necessity can no longer be regarded as an arbitrary importation into Marx's own theoretical equipment or something he merely extracted from other pre-existing sciences. And the passages quoted at the beginning of this paper are seen to lead, by a short route, to the heart of the notion of fetishism.

It is enough to consult any standard commentary on Marx to see that this notion is not free from ambiguity or confusion, and, to some extent, this is also true of Marx's own exposition in the first chapter of *Capital*. It seems necessary, therefore, to adopt an analytic procedure, in an attempt to isolate different aspects of the concept and to examine them separately, even if such a procedure runs the risk of fragmenting what Marx conceived to be a unified phenomenon. For, if it enables us to clarify the aspects, taken separately, the chances of understanding their relations to one another, that is to say, of reconstituting them as a whole, are thereby enhanced. An initial distinction, one which is clear enough, between two aspects of fetishism is provided by the text of *Capital* itself: '... a definite social relation between men ... assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things' (I, 72).

'... their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them' (I, 75).

In capitalist society the phenomenon of fetishism imposes itself on men (a) as mystification and (b) as domination. Clearly the two aspects are intimately related, inasmuch as men are in no position to control, rather than submit to, social relations which they do not correctly understand. And that they are so related is reflected in subsequent literature on the subject where they are normally run together. Thus Garaudy writes: 'The relations between men take on the appearance of relations between objects . . . Things rule the men who have created them.' And Sweezy: '... the real character of the relations among the producers themselves is both distorted and obscured from view . . . the world of commodities has, so to speak, achieved its independence and subjected the producers to its sway.'<sup>2</sup> However, for the reasons stated, I intend as far as possible to maintain the distinction, and to treat mystification and domination separately, taking the latter first although the former is more directly pertinent to the problem of appearance and reality and also more problematic. No discussion of fetishism can ignore this feature of domination altogether, and it may perhaps be appropriate to clear it out of the way.

### The role of Alienation in Capital

What we have to deal with here is not domination in general but an historically specific form of domination. It differs, for example, from the relations of 'personal dependence' which Marx identifies as characteristic of the European middle ages (I, 77), and this for two reasons: whereas there the domination is undisguised, under capitalism it is concealed; secondly, and more to the point here, it is precisely an *impersonal* kind of domination exercised by the totality of economic relations over *all* the agents of capitalist society, embracing also the capitalist whose overriding interest is the extraction of as much surplus labour as possible from the worker. He too cannot be held 'responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains' (I, 10; Preface to the First German Edition). It is unnecessary to rehearse all the aspects of this impersonal domination—the independence of the production process vis-à-vis the producers, the past labour of the worker confronting him as a hostile power in the shape of capital, the instruments of labour employing the worker rather than vice versa, the drudgery and stupefaction of work, and so on. All these are comprised by the concept of alienation. However, in *Capital* this is a historical concept of alienation. Its social and historical premises are precisely economic relations based on the production and exchange of commodities.

This is brought out clearly in the following passages: 'The owners of commodities . . . find out, that the same division of labour that turns

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<sup>2</sup>Roger Garaudy, *Karl Marx: the Evolution of his Thought*, London 1967, p. 125; Paul Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, London 1946, p. 36. Cf. also Georg Lukács, *History and Conscience of Class*, Paris 1960, pp. 110–13 and Sidney Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, London 1933, p. 162.

them into independent private producers, also frees the social process of production and the relations of the individual producers to each other within that process, from all dependence on the will of those producers, and that the seeming mutual independence of the individual is supplemented by a system of general and mutual dependence through or by means of the products' (I, 107-8).

Political Economy has never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour-time by the magnitude of that value. These formulae, which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him, such formulae appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by Nature as productive labour itself' (I, 80-1).

Here, the roots of the phenomena grouped under the term alienation, are located in specific social relations, and not in the fact that there is an ideal essence of man, his 'species-being', which has been negated or denied. And this is the difference that separates *Capital* from certain passages in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*,<sup>3</sup> even though there, too, Marx deals with such features of capitalist society as the domination of the worker by his product and the stultifying character of his work.<sup>4</sup> In place of a concept of alienation founded on an essentialist anthropology, we have one tied to the historical specificity of forms of domination.

To this extent, those discussions of fetishism which simply take for granted the complete unity between the *Manuscripts* and *Capital*,<sup>5</sup> are of dubious value, conflating as they do two concepts of different theoretical status. And when Lukács, in his discussion of fetishism, speaks of one-sided specialization 'violating the human essence of man' (*op. cit.*, p. 128), he is guilty of the same conflation. On the other hand, Althusser has proposed a reading of fetishism in which, of the two aspects that have been distinguished, namely, mystification and domination, only the former is treated. The notion of men being dominated by their own products has vanished (almost) without trace. Such an interpretation demands, of course, that the concept of fetishism be regarded as entirely unrelated to, and independent of, that of alienation,<sup>6</sup> and the latter is accordingly dismissed as 'ideological' and 'pre-Marxist'.<sup>7</sup>

In this reading Althusser is guilty, in the first place, of violating the text of *Capital*, as the following passages make clear: '... the character (*Gestalt*) of independence and estrangement (*entfremdet*) which the capitalist mode of production as a whole gives to the instruments of

<sup>3</sup> T. B. Bottomore (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, London 1963, pp. 126-28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122-25.

<sup>5</sup> Eg. Garaudy *op. cit.*, pp. 52-63 and 124-27.

<sup>6</sup> J.-C. Forquin, 'Lecture d'Althusser' in *Dialectique Marxiste et Pensée Structurale*, special number of *Les Cahiers du Centre d'Études Socialistes*, 76-81, February-May 1968, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, London 1969, p. 239.

labour and to the product, as against the workman, is developed by means of machinery into a thorough antagonism' (I, 432).

'Since, before entering on the process, his own labour has already been alienated (*entfremdet*) from himself by the sale of his labour-power, has been appropriated by the capitalist and incorporated with capital, it must, during the process, be realised in a product that does not belong to him (*in fremdem Produkte*)' (I, 570-71).

'Capital comes more and more to the fore as a social power, whose agent is the capitalist. This social power no longer stands in any possible relation to that which the labour of a single individual can create. It becomes an alienated (*entfremdete*), independent social power, which stands opposed to society as an object, and as an object that is the capitalist's source of power' (III, 259).

And even were the term 'alienation' altogether absent, there are enough passages where the *concept*, and all the phenomena it embraces, are presented, to invalidate Althusser's reading of *Capital* on this point.<sup>8</sup>

However, it is not only a question of the validity of the interpretation of Marx. There are serious theoretical consequences as well. For in Althusser the concept of alienation, as that form of domination engendered by capitalist relations of production, is replaced—and here is its surviving trace—by the notion of men as the mere functionaries, or bearers (*Träger*), of the relations of production which determine their places and their functions.<sup>9</sup> What Marx regards as a feature specific to *capitalist* relations of production, Althusser articulates as a *general* proposition of historical materialism. Thus de-historicizing the concept of alienation in a manner quite strange for a Marxist author (for how is this different from the fault of the classical political economists who regard commodity production as eternal?) he makes it impossible to comprehend, from his perspective, those passages in which Marx anticipates a future social formation where, precisely, men will control their relations of production, rather than be controlled by them, where they will, therefore, cease to be mere functionaries and bearers. We shall see later on that Althusser commits an exactly parallel error in relation to the other aspect of fetishism, mystification. For the moment it is sufficient to observe that, in his legitimate anxiety to be done with the anthropological concept of alienation, he throws out the historical concept as well, de-historicizing it in a 'new' way.

### The reality of Value Relations

Returning now to the problem of essence/appearance and the mystificatory aspect of fetishism, it will be well to make a secondary distinc-

<sup>8</sup> For example I: 112, 310, 360-61, 422-23, 645. There is an excellent discussion of the relation between the *Manuscripts* and *Capital* in Ernest Mandel, *La Formation de la Pensée Économique de Karl Marx*, Paris 1967, pp. 151-79.

<sup>9</sup> 'The Object of Capital', in *Reading Capital* (London 1970), p. 180.



tion: between (a) those appearances, or forms of manifestation, in which social relations present themselves and which are not mystificatory or false *as such*, inasmuch as they do correspond to an objective reality; they become mystified only when regarded as products of nature or of the subjective intentions of men; and (b) those appearances, or forms of manifestation, which are quite simply false, illusion: in the full sense, corresponding to no objective reality. This distinction governs what follows. (Unless, therefore, it is made explicit, the term 'appearance' should not be taken to mean 'mere, i.e. false, appearance'. The same goes for the word 'form'.) And it is a helpful one to the extent that it enables one to avoid the kind of confusion into which many accounts of fetishism fall, and of which the following passage by Karl Korsch is an example: "The value relations appearing in the exchange of the products of labour as "commodities" are essentially, not relations between things, but merely an imaginary expression of an underlying social relation between the human beings who co-operate in their production. Bourgeois society is just that particular form of the social life of man in which the most basic relations established between human beings in the social production of their lives become known to them only after the event, and even then only in the reversed form of relations between things. By depending in their conscious actions upon such imaginary concepts, the members of modern "civilized" society are really, like the savage by his fetish, controlled by the work of their hands."<sup>10</sup>

While there is much here that is unobjectionable (e.g. value relations as the product of social relations, men dominated by their own creations), it is incorrect to describe value relations as imaginary. As I shall try to show, Marx does not do so. Such a description is dangerously close, though Korsch manages to keep his distance, to a purely subjectivist explanation of fetishism, of the kind given by Berger and Pullberg when, in an article on the sociology of knowledge, they formulate the following stupefying definition: "... alienation is the process by which man forgets that the world he lives in has been produced by himself."<sup>11</sup> What they themselves 'forget' is that, if forgetfulness were all that was involved, a reminder should be sufficient to deal with the constituent problems of alienation.

How is it then with Marx? What is in question at the moment are the following forms of manifestation: that labour is represented by the value of its product, labour-time by the magnitude of that value, and social relations by the value relations between commodities. For Marx, neither values nor value relations are imaginary. They are not illusory appearances, but *realities*. This point cannot be emphasized too strongly. It represents a first step towards understanding what is involved in fetishism. Thus he writes: "... the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter,

<sup>10</sup> Karl Korsch: *Karl Marx* (New York 1965), p. 131.

<sup>11</sup> P. Berger and S. Pullberg: 'Religion and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness', *New Left Review* 35, January-February 1966, p. 61.

therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the next appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as *what they really are*, material relations between persons and social relations between things' (I, 73. My emphasis).

It is in the light of this statement that the ambiguous footnote which occurs shortly afterwards should be interpreted: 'When, therefore, Galiani says: Value is a relation between persons . . . he ought to have added: a relation between persons expressed as a relation between things' (I, 74).

This means, not that a relation between persons takes on the illusory appearance of a relation between things, but that where commodity production prevails, relations between persons really do take the form of relations between things. This is the specific form of capitalist social relations; other societies, both pre- and post-capitalist, are characterized by social relations of a different form. A moment's consideration of the defining relations of capitalist society—capitalist/worker, producer-of-/consumer-of-commodities—is enough to verify this. For the capitalist, the worker exists only as labour-power, for the worker, the capitalist only as capital. For the consumer, the producer is commodities, and for the producer the consumer is money. Althusser is therefore correct to insist that the social relations of production are not, and are not reducible to, simple relations between men.<sup>12</sup> And the reply of one of his critics—that they are, but mediated by things<sup>13</sup> is not so much a counter-statement as a restatement of the same thing. It should, however, be borne in mind that the objects, namely commodities, the value relations between which are the form taken by capitalist social relations, are social and not natural objects.

It is just because these value relations are neither imaginary nor illusory but real, that Marx is able to make the following judgement: 'The categories of bourgeois economy . . . are forms of thought expressing *with social validity* the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities' (I, 76. My emphasis).

At the same time Marx describes these forms of thought as absurd. But what kind of absurdity is it? 'When I state that coats or boots stand in a relation to linen, because it is the universal incarnation of abstract human labour, the absurdity of the statement is self-evident. Nevertheless, when the producers of coats and boots compare those articles with linen, or, what is the same thing, with gold or silver, as the universal equivalent, they express the relation between their own private labour and the collective labour of society in the same absurd form' (I, 76).

It is the absurdity not of an illusion, but of reality itself, and to this extent it is an absurdity which is true.

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<sup>12</sup> 'The Object of Capital', op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>13</sup> S. Pullberg: 'Notes pour une lecture anthropologique de Marx' in *Dialectique Marxiste et Pensée Structurale*, op. cit., p. 145.

## The Social Reality behind Fetishized Relationships

Having insisted on the *reality* of value, and of the objective form taken on by capitalist social relations, the form, that is to say, of a relation between objects, we further specify them by emphasizing that they are *social realities*. This determination Marx himself makes quite clear. 'If . . . we bear in mind that the value of commodities has a purely social reality, and that they acquire this reality only in so far as they are expressions or embodiments of one identical social substance, viz human labour, it follows as a matter of course, that value can only manifest itself in the social relation of commodity to commodity' (I, 47).

' . . . the coat, in the expression of value of the linen, represents a not natural property of both, something purely social, namely, their value' (I, 57).

Further, by a third specification, it is necessary to recognize value as the objective form of social relations as *historically specific social realities* and not just social realities in general. From this, three important conclusions are to be derived.

1. The distinctions, form/content, appearance/essence, retain their significance for the analysis and explanation of these realities, but on condition that the first term of each opposition is not taken to be synonymous with illusion. Because the forms taken by capitalist social relations, their modes of appearance, are historically specific ones they are puzzling forms, they contain a secret. The reasons why social relations should take such forms, rather than others, are not self-evident. It requires a work of analysis to discover them, to disclose the secret, and, in doing this, it reveals the contents of these forms and the essence of these appearances. At the same time, the content explains the form, and the essence the appearances, which cease thereafter to be puzzling. But this must not be regarded as a journey from illusion to reality. It is rather a process of elucidating one reality by disclosing its foundation in and determination by another. Thus the form of value (viz., exchange-value) and the object character of social relations is not dissolved or dissipated by Marx as an illusion, but its content is laid bare: the individuals working independently and producing use-values not for direct consumption but for exchange. It is the commodity form itself which is responsible for the enigma (I, 71), and its solution therefore requires an analysis of that form. Similarly, Marx uncovers the content of surplus-value by indicating its source in the surplus labour-time of the worker. He thus discovers *its* secret. Bourgeois political economy, itself unable to hit upon this secret, except in the New World (I, 774) and, even there, without drawing the necessary conclusions, takes the only other road open to it. It de-historicizes value and surplus-value, makes of them products of nature, and, in parallel fashion, regards the impersonal and objective form of capitalist social relations as an entirely natural state of affairs. It thus transforms the properties possessed by commodities, capital, etc., *qua* social objects, into qualities belonging *naturally* to them as things. This is the root and beginning of the mystification of fetishism.

2. It is not that something imaginary has been endowed with the quality of reality. The mechanism of mystification consists in the collapsing of social facts into natural ones. In this way, the value form is fetishized. This is expressed most clearly by Marx in a passage in the second volume, where he refers to: '... the fetishism peculiar to bourgeois Political Economy, the fetishism which metamorphoses the social, economic character impressed on things in the process of social production into a natural character stemming from the material nature of those things' (II, 225).

There is, however, no shortage of examples of Marx observing this metamorphosis in relation to particular features of capitalist society. Thus he writes of the productive power of social labour: '... co-operation begins only with the labour-process, but they [i.e. the workers] have then ceased to belong to themselves ... Hence, the productive power developed by the labourer when working in co-operation, is the productive power of capital ... Because this power costs capital nothing, and because, on the other hand, the labourer himself does not develop it before his labour belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature' (I, 333).

And of money: 'What appears to happen is, not that gold becomes money, in consequence of all other commodities expressing their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in gold, because it is money ... These objects, gold and silver, just as they come out of the bowels of the earth, are forthwith the direct incarnation of all human labour. Hence the magic of money' (I, 92).<sup>14</sup>

And of interest-bearing capital: 'It becomes a property of money to generate value and yield interest, much as it is an attribute of pear-trees to bear pears' (III, 384).

Now, it is in order to undo the mystifying effects of this metamorphosis that Marx insists: '... capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation, belonging to a definite historical formation of society, which is manifested in a thing and lends this thing a specific social character' (III, 794).<sup>15</sup>

The demystification is achieved by means of a denaturation. But this is not the same thing as a de-objectification. Pending the destruction of bourgeois society, capital remains an objective form, a social object, whose content and essence are accumulated labour, which dominates the agents of that society, and it must be comprehended as such.

It should further be noted that the *false* appearances to which the fetishization of forms gives rise are yet 'something more and else than mere illusions'.<sup>16</sup> By this I mean that they are not attributable simply to a failure of perspicacity on the part of the social agents, to some act of

<sup>14</sup> Cf. I, 57-58.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. I, 766.

<sup>16</sup> Henri Lefebvre: *The Sociology of Marx* (London 1968), p. 62.

'forgetfulness', with its source in purely subjective deficiencies. In every case where Marx presents us with an example of fetishization, he goes to great pains to indicate the roots and *raison d'être* of the resulting illusions in the reality itself. Briefly, most, though not all, of his indications can be subsumed under the following general kind of explanation: in capitalist society, the social relations between the producers take the form of objective qualities belonging to their products namely, commodities; there is nothing, however, in the commodity, which indicates that these qualities which it actually possesses as a commodity (say, money) do not belong to it as a thing (gold); the collapse into nature is therefore itself perfectly 'natural', i.e., comprehensible. If then the social agents experience capitalist society as something other than it really is, this is fundamentally because capitalist society *presents itself* as something other than it really is. As Maurice Godellier has put it: 'It is not the subject who deceives himself, but reality which deceives him.'<sup>17</sup>

3. We have seen that one type of mystification consists of reducing the social objectivity of the forms of capitalist relations to a natural objectivity. This mystification is fetishism. However, Marx also exposes a second type of mystification, one which involves a reduction of these forms, in the opposite direction, from social objectivity to social *subjectivity*. This occurs when they are declared to be imaginary, fictional forms. While this is not fetishism, indeed, may be regarded as an over-reaction against it, it is nevertheless a mystification: 'The act of exchange gives to the commodity converted into money, not its value, but its specific value-form. By confounding these two distinct things some writers have been led to hold that the value of gold and silver is imaginary . . . But if it be declared that the social characters assumed by objects, or the material forms assumed by the social qualities of labour under the regime of a definite mode of production, are mere symbols, it is in the same breath also declared that these characteristics are arbitrary fictions sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind. This suited the mode of explanation in favour during the 18th century. Unable to account for the origin of the puzzling forms assumed by social relations between man and man, people sought to denude them of their strange appearance by ascribing to them a conventional origin' (I, 90-1).

Thus, the fact that the material forms of capitalist social relations are not natural ones, does not deprive them of their objectivity, that is to say, of their character of being objects, which become independent *vis-à-vis* the social agents, dominate them according to their own laws, and cannot be ascribed to human subjectivity, either as their source or as their explanation. Such an ascription, whether it be seen as an agreement—convention, consent, social contract—or as a failure of consciousness—act of forgetting, lack of insight, trick of the imagination—has this theoretical consequence: it spirits away the uncontrolled and fundamentally uncontrollable, character of these objects, these forms of capitalist social relations. For, in the first case, it is sufficient to

<sup>17</sup> M. Godellier, 'System, Structure and Contradiction in *Capital*', *Socialist Register* 1967, p. 93.

undo the agreement, make new agreements, work out new conventions, in order to handle the contradictions of capitalism. Marx is plunged into liberal political theory or its poorly disguised variant, social-democratic reformism. In the second case, a new act of consciousness, a reappropriation of the world in thought, serves the same purpose. Marx is plunged into Hegel.

### Pure Appearance: the Wage Form

I have dealt, so far, with those forms of capitalist social relations, those modes of appearance in which they present themselves, which are not illusory as such, but are subject to two kinds of transformation which render them mystificatory: they are fetishized, i.e. grounded in nature, or given an idealistic explanation. I come now to the forms which are illusory in the full sense, appearances which are *mere* appearances. First and foremost here, because it is an illusory form which is itself the source of a number of other illusions, is the wage form. In this, the value of labour-power is transformed in such a way that it takes on the (false) appearance of the value of labour. It 'thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working-day into necessary labour and surplus-labour, into paid and unpaid labour' (I, 539). Which is to say, it conceals the *essential* feature of capitalist relations, namely, exploitation. The latter is based on the difference between the value of labour-power, for which the capitalist pays in order to use it for a given time, and the greater value which the same labour-power in operation creates during that time. But since, in the wage form, what appears to happen is that the capitalist pays, not for the labour-power, but for the labour, the inequality of the exchange is falsely disguised as an equal exchange.

Those passages where Marx refers to the difference between the value of labour-power and the value it creates as 'a piece of good luck for the buyer, but by no means an injury to the seller' (I, 194), and where he denies that 'the seller has been defrauded' (I, 585), must therefore be regarded as having a provisional and double-edged character. On the one hand, it is indeed the case that capitalist exploitation is not fundamentally based on the individual capitalist cheating his workers; according to all the laws of commodity production, the worker does get paid for the full value of the commodity he sells. On the other hand, these laws themselves entail an injury and a fraud much greater than individual cheating, the unconscious injury and defrauding of one class by another. The provisional character of the original statements is, therefore, made plain: 'The exchange of equivalents, the original operation with which we started, has now become turned round in such a way that there is only an apparent exchange . . . The relation of exchange subsisting between capitalist and labourer becomes a mere semblance appertaining to the process of circulation, a mere form, foreign to the real nature of the transaction, and only mystifying it' (I, 583).

Here, the analysis of the form which reveals the content, the penetration of the appearance which discloses the essence, is a journey from illusion to reality. The same goes for another of the appearances to which the

wage form gives rise: namely, the appearance that the worker disposes of his labour-power according to his own free will. This is a mere appearance, an illusion, whose reality is that the worker is forced to sell his labour-power. Thus, the transition from the sphere of circulation, that 'very Eden of the innate rights of man [where] alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham' (I, 176), to that of production which reveals 'that the time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the time for which he is forced to sell it' (I, 302). This transition is one from illusion to reality: '... in essence it always remains forced labour—no matter how much it may seem to result from free contractual agreement' (III, 798).

However, two precisions are required at this point.

1. I have said that these analyses which refer us from the appearance (equal exchange, free labour) to the essence (unequal exchange, forced labour), are at the same time journeys from illusion to reality. They are also, it is clear from the above, transitions from the process of circulation to the process of production. But the circulation process is no illusion. What we are dealing with here are illusions arising *in* and *during* the circulation process by contrast with the realities uncovered by an analysis of the production process. This precision is important, because it is at all costs necessary to avoid dissolving the various 'levels' of the social totality, by regarding them all as mere forms of manifestation of one essential level, and thus depriving them of their specific efficacy. It is the attempt to theorize this necessity in the concept of 'over-determination' that is Althusser's real contribution to contemporary Marxist discussion.<sup>18</sup> Nor is it simply a question here of the relation between the circulation and production processes. As Marx makes clear, from these semblances of the sphere of circulation there arises a whole ideological superstructure: 'This phenomenal form [i.e. the wage form], which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists' (I, 340).

The Marxist critique of the illusions pertaining to this superstructure equally does not deprive it of its positive reality.

2. The decisive factor, which makes possible the discovery in the production process of the essence of the false appearances of circulation, consists in this: that, in moving from circulation to production, the analysis moves from the consideration of relationships between individuals to that of the relations between classes, of which the former are a function. Only this change of terrain can demystify the appearances. Its importance will be dealt with at a later stage of the argument.

The wage form, then, unlike the value form, corresponds to no objective reality. Marx is quite unequivocal on this point and attempts to give it special emphasis: '... "value of labour". ... is an expression as imaginary as the value of the earth' (I, 337).

<sup>18</sup> 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' in *For Marx*, op.cit.

'... "price of labour" is just as irrational as a yellow logarithm' (III, 798).

And yet this illusory form is not one that is easily seen through or dissipated. Marx gave notice of this when he described as one of the three new elements of *Capital* his discovery of the irrationality of the wage form (Marx to Engels, 8/1/1868). But he also says it explicitly in *Capital*: 'These imaginary expressions arise, however, from the relations of production themselves' (I, 537).

'... the price of labour-power ... inevitably appears as the price of labour under the capitalist mode of production' (III, 801).

'If history took a long time to get at the bottom of the mystery of wages, nothing, on the other hand, is more easy to understand than the necessity, the *raison d'être*, of this phenomenon' (I, 540).

Like the illusions of fetishism discussed above, the illusion of the wage form is opaque and tenacious, because here as there it is a case of reality deceiving the subject rather than the subject deceiving himself. This is the way the value of labour-power *presents itself*. And Marx analyses some of the mechanisms of the process—e.g. changes of wages corresponding with the changing length of the working day; 'price of labour' does not seem more irrational than 'price of cotton', exchange-value and use-value being intrinsically incommensurable magnitudes anyway (I, 540-1). In this, as in the earlier case, what Marx tells us is that capitalist society itself is characterized by a quality of opacity, so that *it* creates the necessity of a methodology which will penetrate the appearance to uncover the reality, and then, by a reverse course, so to speak, demonstrate why this reality should take on such an appearance.

### Science and Ideology: the Althusserian Disjuncture

But, at all events, this opacity is a historically specific one. For Marx, different types of social relations are characterized by different degrees of opacity and transparency, and capitalism itself creates the historical possibility of a society where 'the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to Nature' (I, 79). A socialist society would then be one where the social relations are not concealed or distorted by mystificatory ideologies. But here the notion that the distinction, essence/appearance, is a form of scientificity as such recurs in the shape of a problem. For, if the relations of a socialist society will be transparent, then surely this distinction will be unnecessary to the science of that society, and should be understood, like value and surplus-value, as part of that conceptual apparatus necessary to the analysis of capitalism; and not, like, say, forces and relations of production, as one of the concepts which Marxism brings to the analysis of any social formation. Marx's first specification of the theoretical status of the distinction is then further called into question.

In this connexion it is not irrelevant to observe that, in much the same



way as he de-historicizes the concept of alienation, Althusser obliterates the historical specificity of capitalist opacity in his thesis that, for Marx, even a communist society would not be without its ideology (and ideology in the Marxist sense, i.e., involving false consciousness).<sup>19</sup> Moreover it is not the interpretation of Marx that is in question. There are serious theoretical consequences. What becomes, for example, of the notion of the proletariat taking cognizance of its real situation in capitalist society in the act (process, praxis) of abolishing it; of its comprehending the real mechanisms of capitalist exploitation, and revolting against them to create a society in which, among other things, it will be neither exploited nor mystified? What, in short, becomes of the notion of class consciousness? It has vanished literally without trace. In its place appears the radical disjunction (a new 'coupure', this) between the theory, the scientific knowledge, of socialist intellectuals and the ideology of the masses. Thus, Althusser speaks of categories appropriate for the ideological struggle but deficient for the purposes of theory,<sup>20</sup> and of Marxism as a science which produces new forms of ideology in the masses.<sup>21</sup> The unity between the theory of the theoreticians and the practice of the class is broken and one is left with nothing other than a variant of hostile bourgeois caricatures of Leninism: the political leaders use their knowledge to manipulate the consciousness of the masses. Once again, there is a legitimate concern at the bottom of this false position: the concern to preserve the specificity of theoretical practice. There is, after all, some distance between the consciousness of even the most revolutionary worker and the science of Marx or Lenin. But it is a distance and not a rupture. Further, it is the distance of a dialectical relationship, because traversed in both directions. The scientific theory is brought to bear on the consciousness of the class, but the consciousness of the class also directs and provides orientation for the theory. If this unity is sundered, it becomes difficult to distinguish the Marxist theory of political struggle from a theory of manipulation.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps for this reason, Althusser has more recently permitted himself some more adequate formulations of the relation between theory and class, ones precisely which lay emphasis on the ability of the proletariat to comprehend its objective position, and thus liberate it from the postulated eternal subjection to ideology.<sup>23</sup> What is questionable is whether such formulations can be rendered coherent with the theoretical structure he had previously elaborated, or whether, on the other hand, to defend them and give them foundation, he will be forced to abandon his positions one after another.

The source of Althusser's error is that he read in *Capital* only a theory of the *raison d'être* of mystification, a theory which, to be sure, is there. But in this reading he failed to perceive what is also there, a theory of the conditions and possibility of demystification. The latter is, perhaps, less developed than the first, and this primarily because *Capital*

<sup>19</sup> For Marx, p. 232; *Reading Capital*, p. 177.

<sup>20</sup> For Marx, p. 199.

<sup>21</sup> *Reading Capital*, p. 131.

<sup>22</sup> J.-C. Forquin, op.cit., p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Louis Althusser: 'Avertissement aux lecteurs du livre I du *Capital*', in *Le Capital*, Livre I (Garnier-Flammarion, Paris 1969), p. 25.

terminates abruptly as Marx takes up the consideration of classes—'Vingt lignes, puis le silence'.<sup>24</sup> Yet it is plain enough. Speaking of the way in which exploitation is concealed by the circulation process, Marx goes on: 'To be sure, the matter looks quite different if we consider capitalist production in the uninterrupted flow of its renewal, and if, in place of the individual capitalist and the individual worker, we view them in their totality, the capitalist class and the working class confronting each other. But in so doing we should be applying standards entirely foreign to commodity production' (I, 586).

The matter looks quite different: the appearance of a relation of equality between individuals gives way to the reality of collective exploitation. And this is achieved by an analysis of the *essential* relations of capitalist society, i.e. the class relations. But it is not only theoretical analysis which has this effect. The *political struggle of the working class* is an exact duplication. Here, not the analyst, but the organized working class applies 'standards entirely foreign to commodity production'. It ceases to consider the relation of individual capitalist to individual worker and views them 'in their totality' by actually confronting the capitalist class as a whole. By doing so it penetrates the false appearances of bourgeois ideology. This in no sense invalidates Marx's proposition that the workers are inevitably mystified so long as, and to the extent that, they remain trapped within bourgeois relations of production. For, this is so. But the proletariat does not escape these relations of production only on the day of the socialist revolution. It begins to move outside them from the moment it engages in organized political struggle, since the latter involves the adoption of a class position, this criterion entirely foreign to commodity production, and the refusal any longer to think exclusively in terms of relations between individuals. For this reason, the 'structuralist' notions of the revolution as rupture (Althusser) or limit (Godelier) are less precise than the notion of revolution as praxis (with, to be sure, its ruptural point). And the full force of Rosa Luxemburg's insistence on the demystifying effects of mass political struggle becomes evident. At the same time, the Althusserian disjunction between the consciousness of the masses and that of the theoretician is shown to lack foundation. The integral relation between the two is based on the fact that the theoretician takes up, in analysis, the same positions as the masses adopt in political struggle; though, of course, this should not be understood as a reduction of the sort 'theory is practice'.

The above passage from Marx also introduces another dimension of the distinction, essence/appearance, one which has been emphasized above all, by Herbert Marcuse.<sup>25</sup> As we have seen, all the concepts with which Marx specifies the essential relations of capitalist society have a basically cognitive function. They make possible a knowledge of reality in opposition to the false evidences of immediate appearances. But, if, in order to do this, and in the process of doing it, they refer us to 'standards entirely foreign to commodity production', then they are at the same time critical concepts. Thus, the concept of surplus-value

<sup>24</sup> *Reading Capital*, p. 193.

<sup>25</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, New York 1963, pp. 258, 295-6 and 321.

not only permits a comprehension of the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation. By laying bare the division of the working-day into necessary and surplus labour-time, it envisages a state of affairs in which there is no exploitation. It contains 'an accusation and an imperative'.<sup>26</sup> However, this critical function of the concepts must not be understood as a mere taking up of positions, or moralizing. If they fail in their cognitive function, then they are useless in their critical one. When Marx clearly takes his distance from 'that kind of criticism which knows how to judge and condemn the present, but not how to comprehend it' (I, 505), he informs us that the essential concepts derive what validity they have not from their particular moral stance (relativism), but from the fact that they permit a coherent organization of appearances and an explanation of their source such as no other concepts can provide. This is, indeed, the criterion which validates these concepts. As Marcuse has expressed it: 'If the historical structure . . . postulated as 'essential' for the explanation . . . makes it possible to comprehend causally the situation both in its individual phases as well as in terms of the tendencies effective within it, then it is really the essential in that manifold of appearances. This determination of essence is true; it has held good within the theory.'

It remains to make explicit that in *Capital* the distinction between essence and appearance is, as well as everything else, a distinction also between the totality and its parts. Each single relationship or fact is an appearance whose full meaning or reality is only articulated by integrating it theoretically within its total structure. This has already been seen with regard to the light thrown on individual relationships by a consideration of the relations between classes.

But it applies more generally. I confine myself to certain 'pairs' of facts, treated by Marx in his chapter on machinery and modern industry. Machinery is the most powerful instrument for lightening labour; its capitalist employment leads to greater exploitation and domination. Science and technology make huge and unprecedented strides under capitalism; but at the expense of the workers' physical and intellectual powers. Modern machinery shatters the petrified forms of the division of labour creating the need for variability of functions and, thus, for a less one-sided, more rounded, development of the worker; under the anarchic conditions of capitalism, however, the worker lives and experiences this tendency as insecurity of employment and suffering. These pairs of facts are actually contradictions. As such, they represent tendencies which are neither simply progressive, nor simply regressive, because *contradictory*. The essence which explains them, and deprives them of all appearance of contingency, is the central contradiction between forces of production, the increasing productive power of social labour, on the one hand, and relations of production, the continued private appropriation of surplus-value, on the other. They partake of this central contradiction and, as partial facts, are only properly comprehended in relation to the social totality which they and it inhabit.

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<sup>26</sup> Herbert Marcuse: 'The Concept of Essence' in *Negations* (London 1968), p. 86.

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## *Antonio Gramsci and the Italian Revolution*

One of the most dramatic, yet shadowy, events touched upon by Giuseppe Fiori in his *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*<sup>1</sup> is the disagreement between Gramsci on the one hand and Togliatti and the Italian Communist Party on the other, after the political 'turn' brought about by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International. To prevent any speculation, it should immediately be added that the revelation of this dispute does not date from Fiori's book. Already *Rinascita* of December 1964, in a brief comment following the publication of Athos Lisa's report on Gramsci in Prison, pointed out that between 1928 and 1933 the positions of Gramsci at Turi 'showed a way of thinking not only objectively inconsistent with the policy of the Party but actually critical of it on a whole range of questions that had emerged from the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the International, its Sixth World Congress and later its Tenth Plenum' and to which 'the politics of the Italian Party adapted itself.' Fiori's undoubted achievement, is not so much to have actually discovered this disagreement, as to have made the first attempt to set it explicitly into its historical context and to give it a historico-political evaluation.

// (from which we, however, disagree on a crucial point). He has also enriched and clarified its nature with new information, of which one of the  
✓ more important items is the decisive testimony rendered by Gennaro, Gramsci's elder brother, shortly before his death.

We shall assume total ignorance on the part of the reader and resume briefly Fiori's account. In 1928-30 Stalin, who was then engaged in a  
// violent struggle against Bukharin, imposed a sharp turn on the International. The line of this turn, soon to be reinforced by the great economic crisis of 1929, can be summed up in the following terms. Capitalism is in its death-throes and the destruction of bourgeois power will be *immediately* followed by the dictatorship of the proletariat, without a period of transition and intermediate objectives. Social-democracy is not only a non-revolutionary force, an instrument with which the bourgeoisie tries to arrest the revolutionary impetus of the  
// masses, but is itself a form of bourgeois rule: it is, in effect, social-fascism. Communist parties should, therefore, conduct isolated struggle  
✓ for the destruction of capitalism, outside any system of alliances. Their aim should be frontal clash of classes and, in the specific instance of the  
// Italian Party, all-out struggle against the 'Justice and Freedom' group and against catholic and republican anti-fascist forces.

The crude and sectarian character of this Stalinist line is quite clear. It was sectarian because it maintained an equivalence between social-democracy and fascism and because it failed to base its policies on any  
✓ serious analysis of the concrete situation. It was simply absurd in the case of Italy, where fascist reaction and terror had long ago succeeded in breaking up and decimating the organized power of the proletariat. Gramsci's theses, put forward at the Congress of Lyon, were thereby turned upside down.

How did the PCI respond to the new Stalinist directive? It split at the top. In the leadership, Togliatti, Camilla Ravera and Longo adapted themselves to the turn. Alfonso Leonetti, in charge of the clandestine press, Paolo Ravazzoli, leader of the trade-union movement, and Pietro Tresso, in charge of the underground organization, rejected it. All three were expelled for this: first from the leadership, then from  
✓ the Central Committee and finally from the Party.

It is here that Gennaro Gramsci's testimony must be introduced. He was an exile, living in Paris, when he was charged by Togliatti to go and visit Antonio in prison in Turi, to inform him of the recent vicissitudes and to find out his point of view. According to Fiori Gennaro told him that he had found Antonio actively hostile to the expulsions and sharing the opposition to the turn. Altogether, Gramsci was in agreement with Leonetti, Tresso and Ravazzoli on the question of the turn, thought their expulsion unjustified and rejected the International's new policy to which, he thought, Togliatti had agreed too hastily.

However, on his return to Paris, as he was later to recall to Fiori, Gennaro went to Togliatti and told him: 'Nino is in complete agree-

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<sup>1</sup> Now published in English: NIA, 1970, 55a. od.

ment with you.' The reason for this move, as Gennaro explained, was his fear that the accusation of 'opportunism', given the heat of the struggle and the determination of the group around Togliatti to suppress all dissent, would have been levelled even against his brother. 'Had I told a different story, not even Nino would have been saved from expulsion.'<sup>2</sup>

11 But even Gennaro's prudent move turned out to be not quite sufficient. Towards the end of 1930 Gramsci had decided to start a new political education class among his prison comrades and to give a series of talks during the exercise hour in the courtyard. Some comrades (Athos Lisa among others), who were already aware of the new policy of the International and the Party, contended with and combated his theses. Left to himself and subjected to slanderous accusations, Gramsci decided to break off relations with them, and withdrew into isolation. From then on Fiori has commented 'there is no indication, written or oral, of any attempt by Gramsci to contact any member of the Party (at any level, whether in exile or not) during the remaining years in prison and afterwards during his recovery at the Cusumano clinic in Formia (where he was allowed to go out a number of times) and at the Quisisana clinic in Rome'. Tresso wrote that the Party had expelled Gramsci. For its part, *Stato Operaio*, which was being published in Paris under Togliatti, failed to mention Gramsci's name for many years.

Fiori's narrative, resumed here almost in his own words, ends at this point. The authenticity of this narrative has been vindicated by many sources. It has been confirmed by two Communists who were in the Turi prison together with Gramsci. It has further been corroborated by Athos Lisa's report to Togliatti and the Party Centre (evidently at the request of the latter) on the theses held and defended by Gramsci in his opposition to the turn. Finally it has been confirmed by Ezio Riboldi, a Communist deputy, who was also imprisoned at Turi. According to Riboldi, in March of 1931 Gramsci had received an English publication which contained, in invisible ink, resolutions of the Congress of Cologne (which ratified the turn) and, in a fit of irritation, gave the following appraisal of Stalin: 'We must bear in mind that Lenin's intellectual scope was quite different from that of Stalin. Lenin, who had lived abroad for many years, had an international view of socio-political problems. The same cannot be said of Stalin. Having never left Russia, he retained the nationalist mentality, the mentality which can be seen in the cult of "great Russians". We must be on our guard, for inside the International as well Stalin is first a Russian and then a Communist'.

Two main objections have been raised against Fiori's book, by U. Sardia, local Party secretary, in *Rinascita Sarda*, and a note without signature published in *Rinascita*. The essence of their complaints is this. The reasons, writes Sardia, for the expulsion of the 'three' (Tresso, Leonetti and Ravazzoli) were not those reported by Fiori. No doubt grave errors of political perspective and method were committed, but 'the essential element of the turn was the dramatic effort, resulting in an

<sup>2</sup> Fiori, p. 253.

almost superhuman tension, to conduct the anti-fascist struggle inside the country'. Other arguments against Fiori are more general. They appeal to the complexity of the historical period, reproach Fiori with a certain schematism in attributing the 'turn' solely to Stalin, evoke the need for further research, study and meditations. These considerations are all impeccable. But they do not cancel the impression that by exalting virtue to the sky they make it unattainable and that in placing 'historical truth' on high and inaccessible peaks they condemn one to the plain. What *Rinascita*, in particular, offers is not only ungenerous but ultimately does not square with the facts. Why did not Gramsci restore his contacts with the Party? Why did he stay isolated after Turi even when, as in the case of Formia, he was allowed to go out freely? *Rinascita* cites the state of his health as the reason. 'It seemed that Gramsci was going to die any day', for 'such were the conditions under which he continued to live even after obtaining conditional freedom'. This is unfortunately true, but this truth, when pushed to the limit, turns into its opposite. Set free on October 29th 1934, even if only conditionally, Gramsci continued to work and write. 'The will-power of this man,' writes Fiori in his book—a biography which restores Gramsci to his ethico-political greatness without any false glitter of hagiography—'driven almost insane by suffering, certainly bordered on the superhuman at this stage of his life. Even now, he could still react to the remorseless disintegration of his physique and the exhaustion of all his energies by withdrawing into the still centre: instead of giving up, or disappearing, he concentrated the last of his resources on severe intellectual work. To the Formia period (1934-5) belong five notebooks<sup>2</sup> begun at Turi, and another eleven composed entirely in the Cusumano clinic.'<sup>3</sup>

This is what happened. What I now want to ask is the following: *in the name of what political practice did Gramsci oppose the turn?* What was his own strategic perspective? Those who compare the Lyons theses with the exposition of Gramsci's thought outlined in Athos Lisa's report cannot but notice the essential homogeneity of the two documents. Between 1926 and 1932 (which is the time limit of Lisa's report) and, in the absence of proof to the contrary, until his death, the fundamentals of Gramsci's political thought did not change. Naturally this thought became more complex and profound over time, but—and this is the vital point—it never departed from its basic line of inspiration. The general theme of this thought (as it already emerged in the Lyons theses) is *the actuality of the socialist revolution*. In Europe, Gramsci wrote, 'the objective conditions for the proletarian revolution have existed for the past fifty years'. This is the case above all in Italy. Although capitalism there has developed in a weaker and more backward form than in other Western countries (Gramsci wrote forty years ago), this does not mean that the Italian revolution will be bourgeois-democratic; on the contrary Italy, like Russia (and this is the lesson learnt from Lenin and 1917), 'is the *weakest link in the capitalist chain*—which can, and should, be the first to break'.

The attainment of this strategic objective demands, because of Italian backwardness, specific tactics: since the Italian proletariat does not

<sup>3</sup> Fiori, p. 286.



form the majority on its own, it must win over the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. 'Without these alliances no serious revolutionary movement is possible for the proletariat.' The need for these alliances is based on two fundamental conditions: to muster a *force* strong enough for revolutionary attack ('the Party has as its objective the violent conquest of power') and to be able to act with popular consent. The same argument was developed by Lenin in 1917. 'The insufficient strength of the Russian proletarian masses, their inadequate consciousness and organization', wrote Lenin, 'force them to look for allies'. Which allies? 'Russia today is in a state of effervescence. Millions and tens of millions of men and women have woken up and are drawn into political activity. For most part they are peasants and petty bourgeois. Russia is the most petty-bourgeois nation in the world.' These then are the allies. On the other hand 'the less organizational experience the Russian masses possess, the more decisively we should proceed to set up organizational structures for their action'. 'The party of the proletariat should by no means think in terms of "instituting" socialism in a country of small peasantry until the overwhelming majority of the population has acquired an awareness of the necessity of the socialist revolution.'

### Gramsci and Lenin

Gramsci, without necessarily knowing these writings of Lenin, reasoned in a similar manner. In order to demolish fascism and proceed to the socialist revolution, the Italian proletariat must first win over to it wide strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry. However 'the direct struggle for the conquest of power is a step to which these strata can be brought only very gradually'. Therefore: 'the first step to which they should be directed is that which leads them to express themselves on the constitutional and institutional problem'. The *intermediate* objective should be a Constituent Assembly. ('Besides, the first article of the Bolshevik Party's programme included the Constituent Assembly'.) But 'the possibility of transcending intermediate slogans—which mark the various phases in winning over these social strata and thus altering the relation of forces' to the advantage of the working class—demands that the action of the party should also be aimed at '*devaluing all programmes of peaceful social reform*' and demonstrating to the Italian working class that *the only solution possible in Italy is the proletarian revolution*.

These are the general outlines of Gramsci's Leninist conception (it can, of course, be debated how much of it is still relevant today). One can well understand why Gramsci could not possibly have been in agreement with Stalin or have adapted himself, like Togliatti, to the turn of 1928. It should be stressed that Gramsci's opposition was not inspired by petty and local motives, let us say, of a 'national' kind. He opposed the turn because he considered it fatal to the revolution and the interests of the working class. He opposed the liquidation of the 'three' because he opposed the Stalinization of the Italian Party, just as in 1926 (again against Togliatti) he was opposed to the Stalinization of the Bolshevik Party. 'Today you risk destroying your own handiwork, you are degrading and may even annul completely the leading position which the

CPSU acquired under the direction of Lenin. It seems to us that your passionate absorption in Russian questions is making you lose sight of the international implications of these questions, and is causing you to forget that your duty as Russian militants can and must be fulfilled only with reference to the international working class.<sup>24</sup>

Now, what are the errors of political judgment in Fiori's book? He continuously underlines, in a very one-sided fashion, the 'democratic nature' of Gramsci's orientation, thereby losing and weakening many of its essential features—such as the anti-democratist emphasis at the very origin of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, which took shape in the specific forms and institutions of working-class struggle, from the 'Councils' of 1919–20 to the 'Workers' and Peasants' Committees' of '24–25. Not content with this, however, Fiori, in the subsequent discussion aroused in the press by his book has substituted the so-called 'Popular Front' policy for Gramsci's Leninist line.

The logic of his argument is of disconcerting simplicity. 'In all the editions of *Stato Operaio*,' he writes, 'Gramsci's name was not to be seen between 1931 and 1935.' But suddenly in 1937 (he goes on) 'Togliatti' wrote and published in *Stato Operaio* his first essay on Gramsci. What had happened in the meantime? In 1935 the Seventh World Congress of the International had taken place. Stalin's theory of social-fascism had demonstrated all its flaws, absurdity and tragic abstraction... With the shelving of this suicidal policy, the policy of the popular anti-fascist fronts was revived. Namely a return to Gramsci.' Gramsci's position becomes in this way the very policy of the 'Popular Front'. History appears here as a faction struggle. In 1928, at the time of the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, the Italian Party, under pressure from Stalin, renounces the correct line. In 1935, at the Seventh Congress, the situation is reversed: Gramsci's line is taken up again by the Italian Party and the Italian Party line becomes also that of Stalin.

✓ The facts which refute this thesis and which, on account of space, I shall only indicate, are the following: 1. the 'popular front' policy was exclusively concerned with the *defence* of bourgeois democratic institutions, and not with the socialist revolution; 2. the international working-class movement derived this policy from a strategy hinged on the *defence* of the Soviet State. This defence as such was necessary and fundamentally correct. But it is quite clear that it did not need to be externally proposed to Stalin. For Stalin, in the interests of political realism, at this date wanted to avoid the spread of fascism in Europe, namely the encirclement of USSR by *fascist states*—all the more so because of his conviction that all capitalist countries, including England, France and the United States, were inevitably bound to become fascist in the end, since fascism was the typical form of political rule of contemporary capitalism. Thus the manipulation of the international working class by the 'popular front' line was all too clear in its outcome. Firstly, in the vagueness and indeterminacy of the political and the programmatic platform on which these 'fronts' were constituted. Their content remained largely concerned with the 'incompletion' of the

<sup>24</sup> See Fiori, p. 214.

bourgeois revolution, and consequently alliances were established only on 'the lowest common denominator'. Secondly, in the rapidity with which—precisely because of their programmatic vagueness—they entered into crisis and disintegrated. Thirdly, in the fact that the frontist policy of the Communist parties never involved them in any original research into the forms and means of achieving socialism in the West; on the contrary, it implied supine acceptance of the Soviet bureaucratic model.

The 'Popular Front' line, in other words, presupposed a conscious 'duplicity': it was constructed on the separation of means from ends, of tactics from strategy. The defence of bourgeois-democratic institutions remained in this way only a defence, a tactic. It was never imagined that the defence of democracy implies a drive to push its institutions beyond their class limits into a revolutionary transformation of the State.

On the contrary. The strategic aim, namely the conquest of power and the transition to socialism, rather than being adapted to the state of maturity and the development of struggle inside individual countries, was made to depend on 'outside interests': as in the People's Democracies after the War, where the various 'fronts' soon became (and remained for some years) little more than a mask for the bureaucratic régimes installed by the Red Army. The fact that this 'duplicity' (what Togliatti, speaking of PCI policy from 1945 onwards, once called even more appropriately 'duality'), was not an accidental but an integral element of the Popular Fronts, was demonstrated by the record of the French Communist Party, which was the first to try out this policy. This party, in the space of a few years, passed from an adherence and support for the bourgeois government of Léon Blum (that self-confessed manager of capitalist interests), not only to the acceptance (which would still be understandable) of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, but all the way to an infamous attempt to find in this pact a basis 'of principle' in certain 'social' characteristics of the Nazi régime.

These are the essential features of the line that emerged from the Seventh Congress. One can now understand how little basis there was for the attempt (recently repeated by Amendola and Sereni in *Critica Marxista*) to force an opposition between the Sixth and Seventh Congresses in order to erase the deep continuity between the two.<sup>5</sup> Amendola writes that 'the Sixth Congress initiated the period of monolithism within each party, in which there was no longer any place for dissidents or minorities, first within the leadership and then within the party itself. There was even less room for opponents, who came to be accused of "objectively" occupying the positions of the class enemy and who were therefore adversaries to be defeated by all available means. The line of the Sixth Congress thus provoked within the Communist parties a process of "bolshevization", frequently set in motion by

<sup>5</sup> Giorgio Amendola, 'Insegnamenti del VII Congresso del Internazionalismo Comunista (Rileggendo Dimitrov)', *Critica Marxista*, July-August 1965; Emilio Sereni, 'Appunti per una Discussione sulle Politiche di Fronte Popolare e Nazionale', *Critica Marxista*, March-April 1965.

administrative measures, and led up to lacerations and expulsions. But is it not obvious that exactly the same is true of the Seventh Congress? Did it not coincide with the most extreme period of Stalinism, the period of ceaseless trials, suspicion, and purges inside the Soviet Party and all other Communist parties?

All this is of no interest to Amendola. He hopes to extract from an indiscriminate exaltation of the Seventh Congress something that he most needs today: a cover for, and legitimization of, social-democratic ideology in the ranks of the PCI—or, better still, a pretext for charging anybody who opposes him with sectarianism. Today, the epoch of the leading state is over and with it that intimate bond with the Soviet Union which, although one of the ~~two~~ components of the 'popular front' policy, was also in a certain sense its most valid element—in so far as it expressed, even if in a radically distorted form, the *international* character of the movement. Amendola, in celebrating today the Seventh Congress, celebrates and invokes only its other element: adherence to and support for bourgeois governments. It is still uncertain today if sufficient forces will rise from the working-class movement against this operation, to combat and to defeat it. But in so far as it rests with us, we should not allow either Amendola or anybody else to cover themselves with the name of Gramsci as they pursue their own—very different—aims.

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## *Towards a Red Pakistan*

The state of Pakistan is the creation of the reactionary forces that moulded the Indian sub-continent: British imperialism and Gandhian nationalism. Through colonial exploitation the one exacerbated the internal pre-capitalist religious differences of the sub-continent. The other, articulating the interests of the Hindu bourgeoisie under the guise of regenerating the Indian nation, provoked the Muslim people as a whole into a defensive separatism. The ideology that preached non-violence was responsible for the deaths of several millions of people; by its gross and mendacious irrelevance to the problems of the Indian people it is continuing to kill many more. In this situation, the Muslims were led by their own bourgeoisie and landowners into a separatist state, Pakistan. Since then it has been ruled by a coalition of landowners, businessmen, officers and civil servants, and they have been able to hold the predominantly peasant population in subjection, using both armed repression and the manipulation of Islamic and anti-Indian ideology.

As in many other colonial states, the ruling class lacked the political maturity to adopt the classical institutions of political rule as developed in the industrial capitalist world; after 10 years of pseudo-parliamentary rule the army took power in 1958. Since then Pakistan has been ruled by the Ayub Khan clique (1958–69) and the present clique around Yahya Khan. This evolution has posed a definite political choice, clearly brought out by Tariq Ali in the title of his book *Pakistan: Military*

Rule or People's Power'.<sup>1</sup> There have been many cases in the third world of military régimes deceiving the masses through demagoguery at home and a token anti-imperialism abroad; in some cases these have carried through national-democratic reforms. But they have always installed new forms of exploitation over the masses. The examples of Nasser and Kasseem in the Arab world and of a succession of nationalist military régimes in Latin America bear this out. Without organizing and relying on the masses such régimes are precarious and create their own internal relations of exploitation.

Pakistan is a specific, somewhat atypical, instance of this type of régime. Internally the Pakistani state represented the interests of the feudalists and national bourgeoisie, predominantly Punjabis from the West, while the state was administered by the colonial cadres left behind by the British—the civil servants and officers. Internationally it was, from 1954, in direct alliance with us imperialism through the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) and SEATO. With Iran and Turkey it formed the anti-Soviet 'northern tier' of Asian states drummed into an alliance by Dulles. In the Arab world Pakistan played an unequivocally reactionary role—providing officers and men for the Sultan of Muscat's army, helping the British in South Arabia and sending arms and men into royalist Yemen. At the same time it symbolized the aspirations of the most reactionary Arab leaders for a Muslim state, in which class conflicts would be chloroformed by religion. However, in the 1960's Pakistan came to have a close alliance with People's China. On the Chinese side, there were a number of straightforward reasons for this. After the Indian attack on China in September 1962 the Chinese and Pakistanis had a common interest in opposing the common enemy; moreover, as the Soviet-American attempt to isolate the Chinese developed, Pakistan—like Hong Kong—served as a link with the rest of the world.

But this alliance with China was a hindrance to the class struggle of the Pakistani people, and the left National Awami Party muted its hostility to the régime because of the diplomatic alliance with People's China. This contradiction reached its culmination in the period of the overthrow of the Ayub clique, in late 1968. When the Pakistani workers, students and peasants were assailing the forces of the Pakistani state, its representative and future chief, Yahya Khan, was being cordially received in Peking. However, the NAP's major weaknesses are not to be ascribed to the diplomatic positions of People's China. They derive from the ambiguous character of the party itself and of its octogenarian leader, Maulana Bhashani. The party expresses the spontaneous radicalism of the Bengali peasantry, without a scientific conception of organization or re-education, and its relation to Islam is unclarified. It is these factors, *internal* to the Left, that characterize its situation, and a revolutionary party grounded on Marxism would not be politically hamstrung by the diplomatic positions of People's China. Tariq Ali poses the central political problem, that of constituting a revolutionary organization clearly aware of the need to smash the state, and not to rely on infiltrating or influencing a military régime.

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<sup>1</sup> Tariq Ali, *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power*, Jonathan Cape, 1970.

This perspective was concretely opened up by the November 1968 upsurge, which mobilized proletarians and intellectuals in both wings of Pakistan. The state was threatened by a prolonged, yet spontaneous, outburst of revolutionary class forces; these were unable to prevail, lacking as they did an organized expression. The figurehead was changed but the rulers and their agents remained in power. It is within this context that Ali's *Pakistan* has been written: it aims to analyse the first 22 years of Pakistan's independence and to draw conclusions from a critical survey of the Left. He provides an excellent account of the Ayub régime and of the 1968-69 rising and concludes with a chapter on the political lessons and a transitional programme.

A revolutionary strategy in Pakistan faces certain specific problems. The most obvious one derives from the fact that the country is split into two wings, East and West, with different social, ethnic and linguistic systems. The only unity is religious and administrative. The very problem of communication is a major one: 1 per cent of the GNP is spent just on air travel between East and West. The West has exploited the East and has exacerbated already existing differences. This means that while a Pakistani state exists, there is not yet clearly a Pakistani nation. Ali's transitional programme accords the Bengali East the right to self-determination and an independent state, and this also allows for quite different strategies and revolutionary developments in the two sectors. On the other hand the degree of close interaction of the two struggles in the 1968-69 period was a surprise both to Left and Right, and allows for the possibility of a revolutionary alliance of forces in both halves.

While the Pakistani revolution faces this specific problem of its internal articulation it is externally inserted within the Indian sub-continent and the Asian continent as a whole. The conflict over Kashmir and over religion has been used by the Pakistani rulers to mute class differences, as the Arab states use Palestine and the Dublin government uses Northern Ireland. In all three cases too a verbally militant stance has gone together with the betrayal of the people whom these governments claim to be supporting. The solution to the Kashmiri problem is clearly stated by Tariq Ali: self-determination. If these blocks are removed the way is open for a revolutionary solidarity between Indian and Pakistani forces, not only abstractly but in concrete geographic instances like Bengal. The interaction of the two states can therefore be used for and against the revolution. At the same time the sub-continent is situated between an increasingly uncontrollable and anti-imperialist Middle East (Palestine, Dhofar) and an embattled South-East Asia. To the north and east of all of these is People's China. Within this four-cornered Asian situation, Pakistan was nurtured by imperialism because of its strategic position and the possibility of using its religious origins to cement national units. Pakistan is still playing such a role, but the 1968-69 events show the possibility of an alternative future. Tariq Ali's book points the way to a red Pakistan and a red Asia.

*Fred Halliday*

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Our output of mail during the post strike — from January 20 to March 12, 1971 — including some New Left Review Editions, was destroyed. If you corresponded with the NLR office in that period, could you write again quoting all details of previous correspondence to The Business Manager, Joan Beckmann, or for NLR Editions, Laura Mulvey.

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The British bourgeoisie is currently engaged in an attempt to salvage its economic position at the expense of the working class. The compelling reasons behind this bid—more extreme than in other major capitalist countries at the moment—have yet to be adequately analysed. In the first article of this issue, two socialist economists argue that the increased industrial militancy of recent years has combined with harsher international competition to reduce the rate of profit perilously for British capitalism. This thesis is carefully developed and documented. Its conclusions should be seen against the background frequently analysed in these pages: the decline of British capitalism and the archaism of the social formation as a whole, encumbered with institutions inherited from its heyday in the last century. The law of uneven development continues to take a remorseless toll of the class that led the industrial revolution. British capital has no intention of itself covering the costs that rationalization of its own decrepit structures demands. The stage is thus being set for a showdown with workers and trade unions, of which the Industrial Relations Bill is probably only the first episode. Glyn and Sutcliffe emphasize the explosive political potential of this confrontation.

Articles in the review over the past two years have studied the present programme and perspectives of the major Western Communist Parties: in France (NLR 52), Greece (54), Finland (57), Sweden (58) and Britain (64). We now publish an article by Lucio Magri on the largest and most powerful of all the European CPs—the Italian Communist Party. Magri critically examines the record of the PCI in the sixties, and its new projects for the seventies. Italy currently combines both the most dynamic capitalist economy and the highest level of industrial militancy in Europe. The structural tension between the two has put the enfeebled political regime

in Rome under increasing strain. The PCP's attempt to use this situation will, if successful, overtake its own traditional Popular Frontism to the right, and set a new example for its brother parties elsewhere.

The rapid expansion of the women's liberation movement has been accompanied by an increasing number of discussions of women's oppression. Unsurprisingly, this corpus is not at all homogeneous in its political standpoint. Past socialist analyses of the nature of women's oppression have frequently been weak and defective. An assessment of the achievements and limitations of the current literature is badly needed; Branka Magas, in an extended review of three recent volumes, contributes to this task.

The publication for the first time in English of the classic Comintern handbook on Armed Insurrection, written by Piatnitsky, Tukhachevsky, Ho Chi Minh and others, provides an appropriate occasion for reassessing the tactical traditions of a central phase of the Third International. Ben Brewster analyses both the technical and political problems posed by proletarian uprisings, in the context of a new world conjuncture which has witnessed increasing offensive struggles by the exploited in the last decade.

#### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

### **REVOLUTION IN CHILE?**

Debray/Allende

Regis Debray questions President Allende about his strategy for socialism in Chile in discussions which range widely over the nature of the workers' movement in Chile, the strength of imperialism in Latin America, the experience of the first months of the Allende Government, the role of the Chilean armed forces, the seizures of land by peasants since the Popular Front victory and the international perspectives of the new Chile.

In a striking essay of introduction Debray furnishes a Marxist analysis of Chilean history and politics which situates Allende in the past and present of his country and explores the dynamics of the class struggle now unfolding there. This book is a crucial document on an explosive contemporary situation as well as a fascinating study in contrasting political positions.

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Andrew Glyn  
Bob Sutcliffe

## *The Critical Condition of British Capital*

Crisis is a word like wolf: it has been cried too often. But for British capitalism it looks as if this time the wolf is really at the door. A number of facts about the recent evolution of the British economy are well known enough—the rise in unemployment at the same time as an unprecedentedly high rate of price inflation and money wage increase. What is not so well realized, and especially by the left, is the extent to which these trends are eating into the profits of capital. In this article we present and analyse some startling facts about the recent decline in the rate of profit on capital and the share of profits in the national income. From 1964 to 1969 there was a huge increase in the share of the national income taken by the working class. It is a qualitatively new situation which cannot be explained as the result of a cyclical change. 1970 saw a continuation of the trend during a moment of exceptional political weakness on the part of capitalism. Placed in their historical context and related to changes elsewhere in the capitalist world, the economic events in Britain in the last few years seem particularly

dramatic. An evaluation of the possibilities open to British capital and the contradictions which it faces shows that while economic measures and structural changes could bring some relief to capital they are unlikely to offer more than a partial way out. This has decisive political implications for the next few years: the advances made in the fight for higher wages mean that wages cannot remain in the centre of the class struggle. Capital's necessary counter-attack demands that the struggle assumes a more political character.

## Profitability and the share of profits: 1950 to 1969

There are broadly two ways of assessing the relative behaviour of profits; one way is to compare profits to wages (or to national income) to show the *share of profits*; the other is to calculate the *rate of profit* on capital employed. Obviously the two measures are not independent. Writing P for profits, Y for income and K for the value of the capital stock (all in current prices) we have:  $\frac{P}{Y} = \frac{P}{K} \times \frac{K}{Y}$ —the share of profits in income is the product of the rate of profit and the capital-output ratio. Although interdependent, both measures are worth studying. The share of profits in national income shows the outcome of the process or struggle by which the national income is distributed; the rate of profit shows the return earned by capital, expressed as a percentage of capital employed, which through expectations affects the *incentive* to invest and through the provision of finance influences the *ability* to invest.

Before showing our estimates of these measures for Britain there are two general points to be made—one on the *share* and one on the *rate* of profit. First, in assessing changes in the *share* of the national income we have added together wages and salaries. This is important to our argument but may seem wrong. Salaries include professional salaries, payment to company directors and a good deal else which is unquestionably part of the income of the capitalist class. On the other hand, much the greater part of the income which is counted as salaries in official statistics is not of this kind: it is the income of so-called white-collar workers. The distinction between wages and salaries is in most instances a purely formal one concerning weekly or monthly payments. No doubt many employers attempt to use the wage/salary distinction as a means of blunting class solidarity. But the salaried portion of the working class is a growing one. And the most rapidly growing part of the total of salary earners in the last few decades has consisted of those in the lower paid salary earning categories such as administrative, technical and clerical workers. Thus over the long term the difference between the average wage and the average salary has narrowed considerably.<sup>1</sup> So while it is illegitimate to include directors' salaries in labour income, the statistical inevitability of doing so does not matter

<sup>1</sup> C. Feinstein, 'Changes in the Distribution of the National Income in the United Kingdom since 1860', pp. 120-1 in A. Marchal and B. Ducros (eds) *The Distribution of National Income*, New York, 1968.

to our argument since the important question is the change occurring in the *distribution* of income by shares and not the *absolute size* of the portion going to different classes.

Second, the *rate* of profit or rate of return on capital is not the same as the concept used by Marx in analysing the tendency of the profit rate to fall. The Marxian concept (the ratio of surplus to constant plus variable capital) is closer to the share of profits in value added, but it is not equal to that either. The rate of profit, however, does present very much the same *type* of concept which Marx had in mind: the relation between a flow of capitalist income and a stock of capital advanced; in other words it embodies the notions of profitability and the rate at which capital can be accumulated.

### The share of profits

The behaviour of the share of profits and the rate of profit between 1950 and 1969 is summarized in the following table:

	TABLE A								
(Percentages)	1950-54	1955-59	1960-64	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
1. Share of profits	25.2	22.8	21.0	21.2	20.2	17.6	18.1	16.8	14.2
2. Pre-tax rate of profit	20.2	17.3	14.7	14.9	14.3	11.9	12.3	12.6	10.9
3. Post-tax rate of profit	8.1	8.4	7.3	7.1	7.9	5.8	6.0	4.8	3.2

Our measure of the share is the proportion of company profits in value added (roughly wages plus profits) by the company sector, after deducting capital consumption (depreciation) and stock appreciation (that part of profits attributable solely to the increased valuation of stocks as a result of rising prices). A lengthy justification of this particular measure is given in the Appendix. It can be seen that the share declined somewhat throughout the 'fifties and early 'sixties but the decline between 1964 and 1969 from 21.2 to 14.2 per cent (or about one third) is quite out of all proportion to what occurred earlier.<sup>2</sup> Hidden in the five-year averages is a cyclical pattern which is quite marked. Sharp falls in the share occurred in 1956 (from 24.9 per cent to 22.6 per cent) and in 1961 (from 23.3 per cent to 20.5 per cent), two years in which capacity utilization began to fall after reaching cyclical peaks. The accepted explanation for the cyclical behaviour of profit margins is that firms base their prices on some normal level of capacity utilization (and thus productivity) and that it is the fall off in productivity (and thus increase in unit costs) as utilization declines which causes lower margins.<sup>3</sup> To this might be added the point that wages were rising particularly rapidly in those years.

Unemployment in January 1971 was at its highest level since the war, so that the analysis above might suggest that the fall in the share of profits since 1964 could be explained by this. It is crucial to the argument that this is not so. Firstly, while unemployment is at this high level there is evidence that spare capacity is, in fact, less than in previous

<sup>2</sup> In the rest of the argument it would be helpful to bear in mind that in order to have comprised their 1964 share of company value added company profits would have had to be £1400 m. higher in 1969.

<sup>3</sup> See R. R. Nellid, *Pricing and Employment in the Trade Cycle*, Cambridge 1963.

recessions.<sup>4</sup> Nor, secondly, did the rate of wage increase show any dramatic acceleration which, given a general presumption that the faster wages rise the more difficult it is to pass them on in the form of higher prices,<sup>5</sup> could account for the fall in margins. For over the period 1964-69 average wages and salaries per head grew at around 7 per cent p.a. as compared with averages of around 6 per cent p.a. over the previous two five-year periods. Certainly the acceleration of growth of wage costs per unit (from say 3 per cent p.a. to 4 per cent p.a. if trend productivity growth is assumed to be 3 per cent p.a.) looks greater than the acceleration in the rate of growth of wages, but it is still not startling.

It seemed, therefore, highly unlikely that the fall in capacity utilization and acceleration in the rate of wage increase could account for very much of the fall in the share of profits since 1964. In an attempt to make this judgment more firmly based we estimated the extent to which changes in three variables—capacity utilization, the rate of wage increase and world export prices—were correlated with year-to-year changes in the share of profits over the period 1950-65. To the extent that the correlation is strong we can say that a substantial portion of the variation in profit share is 'explained' by changes in these variables. Provided there are reasonable *a priori* grounds for interpreting the causality as running from the variables to changes in the share of profits, rather than vice versa, we can use the correlation as evidence for and an estimate of the strength of the causal link. The *a priori* reasons for expecting capacity utilization and wage changes to affect the share of profits have already been discussed. World export prices of manufactured goods are included on the grounds that a slow rate of growth of world export prices relative to home costs (represented in our regression equation by the wage and salary variable) would cause profit margins on exports and import-competing products to be squeezed.

It transpired that of our three explanatory variables only world export prices were statistically significant, meaning that there was a statistically significant association of rising world export prices and rising share of profits. Faster wage increases and falls in capacity utilization were both associated with falls in profit margins though here the associations, though not negligible, were not statistically significant. This correlation exercise gave us estimated effects on the share of profits of variations in capacity utilization, wages and export prices based on the experience of 1950-65. Given the slight acceleration of wage increases after 1965 and the fall in capacity utilization the experience of 1950-65 suggests that (ignoring devaluation) the share of profits should have fallen by around 1½ points between 1965 and 1969, as compared with the actual fall of about 6 points. If world export prices in terms of sterling had risen by the full amount of the devaluation of 1967 then (on the

<sup>4</sup> For a demonstration of this see the paper by Burman in D. F. Heathfield and K. Hilton (eds), *The Econometric Study of the U.K.*, London 1970 and for explanation the article by J. K. Bowens, P. C. Cheahire and A. B. Webb in the *National Institute Economic Review*, November 1970.

<sup>5</sup> There is the further point that when wages are rising very rapidly firms in industries where productivity is growing fast will not enjoy the natural increase in margins which results from the oligopolistic reluctance to cut prices even when costs fall.



basis of pre-1965 experience) the whole of the 1½ point fall should have been wiped out. These calculations should not be taken as being more than suggestive, since we have only estimated some rather crude models explaining (in a statistical sense) the share of profits, and wide margins of error always apply to this sort of analysis. Nevertheless it does suggest very strongly that the behaviour of the share of profits after 1965 does represent a marked change in the trend of a slowly declining share which was observed over the period 1950-65.

It is a good deal easier to dismiss some possible explanations of these developments since 1965 than to provide a wholly satisfactory answer. The basic fact of the matter is that firms were not able to pass on higher wage costs in the form of higher prices to anything like the same extent as previously. In some sense this *must* be the result of increased competition, presumably on an international scale and which is not satisfactorily captured by our crude export price variable.

According to *The Economist* of 23.1.71 NEDO has argued that firms have been less prepared to risk a strike, rather than concede large wage increases because 'a company temporarily put out of operation by a strike risks a permanent loss of its share of the market. The effect of progressive tariff cuts has been to make markets less protected than before, and international competition tougher. After the seven weeks long Pilkington strike many of the company's old customers continued to buy some of their glass from other suppliers.' The OECD's recent inflation report<sup>6</sup> claims that at the same time as making wage increases more difficult to resist 'the rapid growth of international trade has contributed to holding down prices, both by providing lower cost substitutes for domestic products, and through its effects on productivity and price policy in domestic sectors exposed to foreign competition.'

A very suggestive episode in this respect is the behaviour of export prices after the devaluation of 1967. It was widely assumed that exporters would take advantage of the devaluation to raise their export prices (in terms of sterling) and so increase their profit margins which had been eroded by the relatively rapid increase in UK costs. But as the National Institute Economic Review for February 1969 put it: 'The price rise in response to devaluation was much less than had initially been anticipated.' Their relatively high profit margins, aided by falls in unit wage costs in 1968, allowed competitors such as Germany and Italy to reduce their (dollar) export prices somewhat. This meant that UK firms had to keep increases in export prices (in sterling) to a minimum if they were to gain any competitive advantage; some increase in export prices being inevitable anyway as a result of the increase in import and domestic costs.

Bearing this in mind some review is called for of the argument that the fall in the share of profits was not due to particularly high wage increases. Wage increases take place in a particular context of national and international competition and, even if they do not represent a very marked acceleration of wage costs they may still result in a reduction of

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<sup>6</sup> OECD, *Inflation, The Present Problem*, 1970, paragraph 126.

margins if competition is particularly severe. It seems highly likely that the fall in the share of profits would have been very much less, had the slight acceleration in wage increases not occurred; though perhaps it would have actually required a rate of wage increase slower than in the earlier period for the fall in the share of profits to have been as gradual as it had been in previous years. One further point which should be mentioned is the effect of the Prices and Incomes Policy which, it was often argued, had greater effect on prices than on wages and so resulted in a decline in margins; this argument applying particularly to 1966. This may be true, though it is difficult to secure any additional evidence which says much more than that prices simply rose less fast than wages. But if it is true then firms should have made a determined effort to restore margins after the freeze was over. This may have happened but clearly the attempt was unsuccessful, presumably as a result of being forestalled by this time by higher wage increases. It seems therefore that for the Prices and Incomes Policy to have had such an irreversible effect it must have coincided with a period of heightened international competition.

### The Rate of Profit

We have taken as our measure of the pre-tax rate of profit the ratio of profits earned for shareholders before tax (i.e. after deduction of interest) to the book value of shareholders' assets (the total book value of the company's assets less amounts owing to debenture holders, banks, etc). We focused on the return earned by shareholders as likely to be the profitability variable affecting investment and as certainly being the variable measuring potential internal finance since only shareholders' profits can be retained. This measure was calculated for the crucial quoted company sector in manufacturing industry, and is shown in row 2 of Table A. Overall, the pre-tax rate of profit behaves very like the share of profits up to 1964 though, as argued in the Appendix, the fall may be somewhat exaggerated by measuring capital at its historical cost. Apart from 1968 the similar pattern for the rate and share continues on to 1969, and some independent evidence suggests that over this period the fall in the pre-tax rate shown in Table A is not exaggerated by our measure of capital. The divergent behaviour of the rate and the share in 1968 can be attributed to the fact that the activities of UK manufacturing companies overseas are included in both the capital and profits figures. Devaluation at the end of 1967 inflated the sterling value of overseas profits, while no compensating adjustment was made to the sterling value of assets, so that the apparent rate of return on overseas operations increased and this offset the fall in the return on domestic operations.

The post-tax rate of profit is the return (dividends net of income tax and retained earnings) on shareholders' assets in the quoted manufacturing sector. It is likely to be the strategic variable affecting investment, certainly as far as supply of finance is concerned and for large firms with sophisticated appraisal techniques at least, on the incentive side as well. As argued in the Appendix the actual proportion of company income taken in taxation is a complicated function of tax rates, investment incentives and investment levels so that interpretation is very difficult.

The post-tax rate of return (in contrast to the pre-tax rate) did not fall between 1950-54 and 1955-59; this partly results from a higher level of investment (and thus tax allowances) but there was also a distinct fall in tax rates. Again the fall between 1955-59 and 1960-64 was much less for the post-tax than for the pre-tax rate. Some part of this was again due to yet higher levels of investment, but for the most part the stability of the post-tax rate was the result of more generous investment incentives which genuinely increase the post-tax rate of return on new investment.

To some extent the really amazing decline in the post-tax rate over the 1965-69 period is the result of less generous investment incentives. The main factor in making the fall in the post-tax rate so much greater than the fall in the pre-tax rate, however, is the fact that in 1969 the level of stock appreciation was more than 22 per cent of taxable company income compared with 9 per cent in 1964.<sup>7</sup> Now stock appreciation is treated as taxable profit and thus inflates the tax bill. Inflation therefore imposes a real burden on companies as tax liabilities are increased on account of the stock appreciation, but stock appreciation is excluded from our measure of the post-tax rate of return on the grounds that it represents a nominal, but not a real return on capital (see Appendix). This is very important, for if stock appreciation was not deducted the post-tax rate of return would have been around 7 per cent in 1969 as compared with around 9½ per cent in 1964—a much less serious decline, though significant nevertheless.

It is quite implausible to suppose that the measured fall in the rate of return is due to some systematic under-reporting of profits. The obvious point is that it would require a quite unbelievable *increase* in such under-reporting to cause a very large *fall* in the rate of profit. Moreover while under-reporting would reduce tax liabilities it of necessity reduces published profitability; this will have adverse effects on the share price and thus an *increase* in under-reporting is most unlikely when profits are falling anyway.

## Profits and Wages : 1970

From the latest figures available it appears that the downward trend in the share of profits continued in 1970. After allowing for stock appreciation the share of company profits in total incomes (the only figures available) fell from 11 per cent in 1969 to 10 per cent in the first three-quarters of 1970.<sup>8</sup> This suggests that the share of profits in company value added (after capital consumption and stock appreciation) will certainly be not much more than 12 per cent, and perhaps less. This implies a fall of more than 40 per cent since 1964. Capacity utilization continued to decline somewhat, with output rising by about 2 per cent, but the qualitatively new factor was the wage explosion. According to *The Times* of 14.1.71 hourly earnings for manual workers rose by 15-16 per cent in the 12 months ending October 1970, and figures for

<sup>7</sup> *National Income 1970*, Tables 13, 26 and p. 105.

<sup>8</sup> *Economic Trends*, January 1971.

recent settlements (reported by *The Times* of 15.1.71) give no reason for believing that much slackening in this rate of increase has occurred.<sup>9</sup> Retail prices rose by 8 per cent in 1970 as compared with 5 per cent in the previous year (*The Times*, 16.1.71). Had it not been for a marked acceleration of inflation in competing countries the situation for British capital would have been more desperate still.

Given what had happened up to 1969 it is surprising to say the least that 1970 saw not the recapturing of some ground by the capitalist counter-attack, but a continuation of the same trends. This could not have happened without the critical political events of 1969 and 1970. June 1969 had seen the withdrawal by the Labour government of its Industrial Relations Bill in response to pressure from the labour movement and in anticipation of an election. With the then incomes policy rapidly losing even nominal adherence, the Bill had become an essential precondition to a new Labour strategy to fight rising wage costs. It is clear that political factors ruled out a simultaneous attack on the incomes policy and trade union reform fronts; and Labour had now exhausted both these weapons.

The election in June 1970 prevented any further move by Labour to control wages before it left office. It was, of course, impossible for the Tories to build in a short time the base for a successful attack on wage demands; this required the arduous passage of their Industrial Relations Bill. And so the change of government supplied no immediate substitute for any of the rusty anti-wage weapons which Labour had used and discarded. What was available was a sustained campaign through the media to bring the level of settlements down and sometimes, when it came to a strike, scarcely veiled encouragement to public violence against strikers given by senior ministers. Ironically the enlistment of public feeling against wage claims has been made more difficult by the strength of sterling and the balance of payments whose previous weakness had often been used to persuade unions to restrict claims in the 'national interest'.

## The Historical Context

It is a cherished myth of economists that the share of the national income taken by labour has remained roughly constant for more than a century. Recent work shows that beyond question this is false; since 1910 there has been a significant increase in labour's share of national income, though whether the move was steady or irregular varies with different ways of measuring it.

If you include in profits rents and the income of capitalists on foreign investment then the share of income from employment (wages and salaries) rose from 47.3 per cent in 1910-14 to 67.4 per cent in 1960-63. Mostly this change appears to have happened during the two world wars. The wars seem to have accelerated the long-run decline in rents (partly the result of the declining importance of agriculture); but more

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<sup>9</sup> This is important given the Tory strategy of successively reducing each settlement.

important they were both periods during which foreign assets were sharply reduced through sales to finance the war effort, confiscations in enemy countries and as a result of socialist revolutions. The income on foreign investment fell from 8.4 per cent to 4.5 per cent of the national income during the First World War and from 4.1 per cent to 1.7 per cent during the Second.<sup>10</sup>

If you leave out rents and foreign income then you get a picture of the share of profits and wages and salaries in domestically produced income—a rough picture in other words of the rate of exploitation inside Britain. Measured in this way labour's share has still been rising, but rather more continuously, since before the First World War. In the words of Feinstein's authoritative study, 'It increased very markedly between 1910-14 and 1920-24; was steady between the wars; rose again, though only very weakly, during or immediately after World War II; and has continued to creep upwards in the post-war period.'<sup>11</sup> Labour's share in domestic income (excluding rent), in fact, went up from 68.8 per cent before the First World War to reach 84.0 per cent by 1960-63.

The consequences of this for Feinstein's estimate of the rate of profit in money terms (including rent) were to reduce it from 12.7 per cent to 6.5 per cent during the same period. In real terms it appears that most of this drop came during the First World War since when (up to the early 1960's) the real rate of return on capital appears to have been very nearly constant at just over 6 per cent. Even during the Second World War the fall was very small. But this constancy is shattered once again if you exclude rents,<sup>12</sup> which with decontrol have been rising in recent years as a share of national income. So the real rate of profit on industrial capital had correspondingly fallen.

All this needs some qualification. First, some capitalist income is included in salaries; but since the non-capitalist portion of total salary earners has been growing, the figures may even *underestimate* the increase in the share of labour which has taken place.<sup>13</sup> Since wage earners are a diminishing proportion of the working population, and have probably in recent years been decreasing in absolute numbers as well, the much vaunted constant share of income going to *wages* alone gives rise to an illusion: a constant share of *income* has gone to the falling share of the working population who are wage earners; hence their position has relatively improved.

Second, there is, in fact, some evidence of an increase in the share of

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<sup>10</sup> Feinstein, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129. Feinstein omits rents because of the misleading effects of control and decontrol on their movement. He divides self-employed income into labour and property income by comparing it with average pay of employed people.

<sup>12</sup> Which we did in the calculations of the previous section as we wanted to focus on the return earned in industry.

<sup>13</sup> This is true unless the rate of increase of non-labour salaries per head had been sufficiently greater than that of the labour portion to offset the trend in numbers of earners. We know of no evidence that it has.

profits in company income over the period from 1938 to 1948,<sup>14</sup> giving rise to the idea that some of the shift against profits during these years was the result of changes in the pattern of aggregate national expenditure in favour of services, especially government services like education and medicine, without a large direct private profit component. Changes of this kind could, of course, explain some of the rest of the long term decline in the share of profits. But in practice the structure of expenditure did not change enough between 1950 and 1970 to make any appreciable difference (see Appendix).

These two qualifications then do not weaken the earlier conclusions. British capital lost a major part of its share of the national and domestic income during the First World War. It never recovered entirely from this blow during the 1920's and 1930's. Throughout the inter-war period, even before the great slump, profits were low, investment was low and unemployment was high. Some capital got state subsidies but mostly it had to rely on fighting the working class for a higher share of income. From the figures it appears that the significance of the class struggles which culminated in the General Strike in 1926 lay in defeating the unions before they could make any real further inroads on the capitalist share of the national income, rather than in reducing labour's share.

The loss of foreign income during the wars was less catastrophic than it would appear. It was a major loss to the capitalist class as a whole but the separation of finance from industrial capital before 1914 meant that it did not itself have much direct impact on the situation of domestic capital. Before the war almost all foreign investment had been done by the finance capitalists. Direct investment by corporations overseas (the common pattern today) did not begin until after the First World War and only on a large scale after the Second World War.

## International Comparisons

The OECD's inflation report<sup>15</sup> contains a good deal of material relating to the behaviour of income shares, pointing out the exceptional position of Britain in relation both to the long-term trend and to short-term cyclical movements.

On the post-war long-term *trend* in the behaviour of the share of employed labour in total income the Report finds that only in the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent the UK, is the increase in the share greater than can be accounted for by the reduction in the importance of self-employment. Elsewhere, particularly in Japan, the US and France, the growth of the share of employed labour is small relative to shifts in employment structure.

It is evident, the Report goes on, that *cyclical* shifts between labour incomes and profits, and between different categories of labour in-

<sup>14</sup> P. B. Hart (ed.) *Studies in Profit, Business Saving and Investment in the United Kingdom, 1920-1962*, vol. 2, London, 1968. Tables 11, A.1 and 18.A.1.

<sup>15</sup> OECD, *Inflation, The Present Problem*, 1970.

come, play a central role in the process of wage/price inflation. The share of wages and salaries tends to fall below its trend from some where around the mid-point of an expansionary phase until some time after demand pressures have risen to above-average levels. In the other half of the cycle, the share of wages and salaries has generally risen above its trend starting in the middle of the period of overheating and continuing into the subsequent cooling-off period. This involves the correction of distortions of the structure of incomes resulting earlier in the cycle from the typical delayed reaction of wages to productivity and price developments. Generally, the Report continues the levels reached in 1970 although higher than the long-term trend do not appear abnormal in the light of earlier cyclical experience though it regards the us, the uk and to a lesser extent Germany as exceptions to this. The Report sees the move from a period of underemployment as important in the us; on Germany it mutters rather unconvincingly about the amplitude of cyclical fluctuations, predicts the shift to labour will continue but warns that 'if reasonable price stability is to be restored past cyclical experience suggests that it (labour's share) will have to be stabilized over the coming 12-18 months'. The 'most striking' case of the uk, the Report notes, is least explicable in terms of cyclical experience. The sharp rise in labour's share in Italy is attributed to the 'wage-explosion' of late 1969.

Perhaps the most important sections of the Report are paragraphs 24 and 25 which are worth quoting in full.

24. In the light of the above, the proposition that there has been an unusual coincidence of high demand pressures in 1969-70 would seem to be a considerable oversimplification. Indeed the most interesting feature of the last two years—and also perhaps the most disquieting—is that there has been noticeably more synchronization in price movements than in demand conditions.<sup>16</sup>

25. Bringing together the story for prices and for demand, and anticipating some what on the later discussion, it may be useful at this point to attempt to summarize the genesis of the present situation. The widespread and historically high price increases in the first half of 1970 resulted from the combination of a number of factors of which the following appear to have been the most important.

- (i) The continued high rate of inflation in the United States for over a year after demand pressures began to ease in 1969.
- (ii) The steady acceleration of price increases in the United Kingdom—despite gradual easing of demand pressures—of which only a part can be attributed to the price-raising effects of the 1967 devaluation and the policies which followed it.
- (iii) The upward pressure on the price level in France resulting from the strikes and substantial wage increases of May/June 1968 and the devaluation of August 1969, and the similarly autonomous nature of the recent wage explosion in Italy.
- (iv) The emergence of a strong boom in Japan and Germany; the latter in particular having a strong impact on neighbouring countries.

In other words, since the emergence in 1966 of serious overheating followed by cost inflation in the United States, a succession of somewhat heterogeneous developments has led to the disappearance of the 'islands of stability' outside the United States which had been a typical feature throughout most of the 1960's.

<sup>16</sup> Prices in OECD countries rose by an average of 5.5 per cent in 1970. Treasury calculations (reported by Oppenheimer in *The Times* of 3.2.71) suggest that the competitive advantages conferred by the 1967 devaluation had been largely retained up to the middle of 1970 in terms of both wage costs and exports prices, which recently in OECD countries have been growing more rapidly than usual relative to domestic prices (See OECD, *Inflation: The Present Problem*). Nevertheless the volume of UK exports has been virtually stagnant since the third quarter of 1969 despite quite rapid expansion of world trade (see *Economic Trends* Oct. 1970 Table A and *The Times* 15.1.71.).

It is true that in the United States wage growth remained relatively slow, and from the first half of 1969 to the first half of 1970 (though not in earlier years) real average earnings probably fell a little; though even there, with a decline in real national income, labour's share still rose.

Nonetheless it seems to us highly questionable to characterize developments in Western Europe at least as 'heterogeneous'. The heterogeneity is wishful thinking on the part of the OECB, based on the nature of demand conditions in the different countries. It ignores the significant homogeneity of 'wage explosions' and/or more than cyclical increases in labour's share of national income in the UK, Germany, France and Italy. These have occurred at roughly the same time and in most cases have coincided with an unmistakable intensification of the class struggle.

## Possibilities and Contradictions

British capital faces a working class which, though increasingly militant over wages, is as yet less politically conscious than its counterpart in some other European countries. Yet in purely economic terms it appears to be in a more desperate situation than European or even American capital. In this section, under a number of headings, we try to assess three things: first, how various factors have either offset or accentuated the problem of the low rate of return on capital in the recent past; second, how some of the major features of the economy are likely to evolve in the close future; and third, the extent to which capital can use any of these factors to obtain a purely economic solution to its difficulties.

Most of the measures available in principle would appear either to be insufficiently effective, or to face major obstacles or to contain their own contradictions. Some of them, however (notably taxation and public expenditure) will still be used; even so, it is hard to see how in the short term at least massive liquidations are to be avoided. Rolls Royce, which went bankrupt on February 4th, 1971, though peculiar in some respects,<sup>17</sup> found itself with a particularly severe case of a disease which affects many other sections of British capital.

### Domestic Investment

Perhaps the most obvious effect of a fall in the rate of profit is that it jeopardizes the level of investment (rate of accumulation of capital). Current profits may affect investment either by influencing expectations about the profitability of investment<sup>18</sup> or through their role as the major normal source for the finance of investment. The rather in-

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<sup>17</sup> Contrary to first impressions Rolls Royce's problems had nothing to do with wage increases as their contract for the RB 211 was a flexible one. (*Sunday Times*, 8.2.71). The problem was the low base price which was apparently forced by international competition.

<sup>18</sup> Even if saving is not much affected by the rate of interest, the choice of assets



determinate results of econometric studies of the influence of profits on investment in the UK, cannot, in view of the enormous fall in profitability in the recent period, be extrapolated to the present time.

After almost four years of stagnation since the beginning of 1969, manufacturing investment rose by more than 5 per cent a year from mid-1968 to mid-1970 partly, at any rate, in response to increased export demand after devaluation. This has been at the expense of an enormous reduction in company liquidity. Between the end of 196 and the second quarter of 1970 the liquid assets of industrial and commercial companies grew by less than 6 per cent, while their borrowing from banks increased by around 75 per cent so that the ratio of liquid assets to bank borrowing fell from 1.16 to 0.70,<sup>19</sup> this trend being particularly strong since the end of 1968.<sup>20</sup>

The drastic effect of the fall in post-tax profit on the company's financing situation is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that in 196 stock appreciation of quoted companies in the manufacturing sector (at around £500m) was very much larger than their retained profits after depreciation (around £300m); and about equal to retained profits plus receipts of investment grants. This means that more than the total of retained profits (as calculated in company accounts) was in fact devoted to financing the increase in the money value of stocks due to price changes; or, to put it another way, there were no *real* retained profits at all. Certainly depreciation financed around 60 per cent of gross fixed investment, but current cash flow provided *nothing* for the finance of net fixed investment, acquisition of subsidiaries and increase in stocks which could only be financed internally by reducing liquid assets (see section on Finance below).

The latest Department of Trade and Industry investment intentions survey (reported in *The Times*, 19.1.71) forecasts that manufacturing investment will fall slightly in 1971; the above analysis suggests that the decline may become very significant. The Treasury's evidence to the Wilberforce Court of Inquiry into the electricity dispute (*The Times* 15.1.71) took the same view: 'The resulting sharp narrowing of profit margins is having adverse effects on investment plans, both through reducing cash flow and by reducing the expected profitability of new investment.'

Keynesian methods of demand management have certainly reduced the vulnerability of advanced capitalist countries to 1930's-type slump

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towards which savings may be directed (real capital or financial assets for example will certainly be influenced by relative rates of return. For example Antony Vio writes in *The Times* of 20.1.71 (commenting on the low rate of return being earned in the UK) 'It will make better sense for many companies to invest their money in fixed-interest securities with no management problems and virtually no risk, rather than new factories or working capital.' Many firms may also have the possibility of direct investment overseas.

<sup>19</sup> *Financial Statistics*, December 1970, Table 78

<sup>20</sup> Much the same is happening in the US. See 'The Long-run decline in liquidity' *Monthly Review*, September 1970.

resulting from reductions in private investment. But the very success of full-employment policies has led to the elevation of sustained growth in consumption as a policy goal and the ability of the system to operate successfully in this respect depends on a high level of manufacturing investment and the associated productivity increases. At the same time failure to secure productivity growth weakens British capital competitively and thus would lead to further falls in the profit rate.

### Take-overs and Mergers

The decline in the rate of profit since 1965 has been accompanied by a merger/take-over boom of staggering proportions. Taking the seven years 1964-70 expenditure on acquisition of subsidiaries by industrial and commercial companies (treating the smaller of merging companies as being acquired by the larger) has been over £7,000m. In the four years 1967-70 it has been well over £5,000m,<sup>21</sup> considerably more than the total for 1950-66. The price paid for subsidiaries may exceed the book value of assets, though the excess is unlikely to be very considerable given that the ratio of market value to book value of assets for companies has not been much excess of 1 over the period, and companies which are taken over will tend to be unprofitable and not very highly valued. Some double counting may occur if the acquiring company is subsequently taken over. But some idea of the order of magnitude of these takeovers may be gained by comparing expenditure with total book value of net assets—around £24,000m at the end of 1968. It may thus be seen that in the four years 1967-70 perhaps around one-fifth of all assets of industrial and commercial companies was acquired by other companies.

It would be an oversimplification to suggest that capital reacted mechanistically to observed falling profit rates by a great splurge of takeovers designed to fortify monopoly positions and thus enable a recoupment of profit margins through price increases. For one thing it has been argued that a necessary factor in falling profit has been a strengthening of international competition and thus to be the sole UK producer of a product would not necessarily represent a classical monopoly position.<sup>22</sup> A more likely explanation is that the boom represented a reaction to just those forces of international competition which were partly responsible for the falling rate of profit. Larger scale production, and perhaps more important the concentration of production in the hands of the 'best' managers (Weinstock/Stokes, etc.), were encouraged by the Labour Government as a way of combating, and hopefully reversing the decline in competitiveness. Greater productivity would certainly allow a restoration of profit margins or a halt in their decline to the extent that competition does not force a passing

<sup>21</sup> Figures from *Trade and Industry*, 2.12.70, and *Business Monitor* M3, *Economic Trends*, April 1962.

<sup>22</sup> If a newly created monopoly puts up prices it is certain that its profit rates will increase, but whether this is at the expense of wages or of the profits of competitive sectors depends on the extent to which these sectors can pass on higher costs of intermediate goods bought from monopolies and wage increases induced by the price increases.

on of these gains in the form of lower prices.<sup>23</sup> When output is growing slowly, however, it is unlikely that productivity increases through rationalization can be absorbed within the firm in higher output, rather than a reduction in employment. The problem of redundancies becomes acute, therefore, and working-class resistance is in turn strengthened by the high level of unemployment.

### Foreign Investment

Faced with a falling rate of profit at home a natural reaction for British capital is to invest abroad, though some companies, by the nature of their activities, will find this easier than others. This assumes that the 'superior profitability' of foreign investment, which J. H. Dunning found before the recent drop in home profitability, persists. In the early 1960's Dunning found that 'the trend of profitability is in favour of foreign investment'.<sup>24</sup> It also appears that investment abroad is anyway becoming the most effective means of penetrating world markets.<sup>25</sup>

In fact direct investment overseas (setting up or buying capacity) has risen from averages of around £220m p.a. in 1959-63 and £280m p.a. in 1964-67 to £410m in 1968 and £531m in 1969.<sup>26</sup> Figures for the first three quarters of 1970 suggest that the 1969 level will at least be maintained. Even after allowing for the effects of devaluation on their sterling value, profits earned abroad on direct investment more than doubled between 1962 and 1969,<sup>27</sup> as compared with an increase of little more than a third in profits earned in the UK. Receipts by the private sector of profits and interest from abroad rose by £266m between 1964 and 1970, about one-fifth of the amount by which 1969 domestic profits fell short of the 1964 share. If these net receipts are added to both company profits and value added it means that the share of capital in 'national private corporate value added' falls slightly less fast than the share of capital in domestic private corporate value added which is the measure we have used. But our figures for the rate of return already include profits earned abroad by UK companies.

Although income earned abroad, net of foreign taxes, is around double direct investment overseas, some companies with few existing interests overseas will find future rapid expansion abroad cramped by low profitability at home. Other companies with large interests overseas may still require overseas earnings to 'subsidise' dividends paid on unprofitable capital at home, again imposing a limit on the possibility of expansion overseas from internal sources. Companies which can finance a high level of direct investment overseas will of course grow in

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<sup>23</sup> Since prices are not increased the question of whether the gain in profits in the rationalised sector is at the expense of other sectors of industry does not arise (see footnote 17).

<sup>24</sup> J. H. Dunning, *Studies in International Investment*, London, 1970, p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> R. Rowthorn's paper to Tilburg Conference 'Capitalism in the Seventies'—to be published.

<sup>26</sup> United Kingdom *Balance of Payments 1970*, Table 29 and *Financial Statistics*, Dec. 1970, Table 87—oil is excluded. In 1968 £177m went to the overseas Sterling Area (a somewhat lower proportion than in earlier years); of the rest £114m went to the US, £73 to the EEC, and £19m to EFTA.

<sup>27</sup> UK *Balance of Payments*, 1970, Table 23.

strength, relative to those confined to low rates of profit at home, provided of course the profitability of foreign investment does not decline in line with that at home.

## Finance

The fall in company liquidity over the past two years has already been mentioned. A related result of the combination of low profitability and a high rate of expenditure on investment (particularly acquisitions) has been a very marked acceleration in the trend away from finance out of current cash flow (depreciation and retained earnings).<sup>28</sup> Table B showing financing proportions for quoted companies in manufacturing illustrates this well.

TABLE B <sup>29</sup>					
Proportion of finance from:	1950-54	1955-59	1960-64	1965-69	1967-69
Current cash flow	81.9	73.8	68.0	57.5	52.9
Issues of shares and debt	20.2	27.0	28.2	38.3	42.1
Bank and other short-term borrowing less short-term lending (trade credit, etc.)	-2.1	-0.9	3.8	4.2	5.0

Even though mergers and acquisitions usually require the raising of no additional finance from outside the company sector, they still involve the acquiring company in using cash or issuing its own shares or bonds in exchange. Companies may not be willing to issue shares if their share price does not reflect what management considers a true valuation of the companies' prospects; an attitude which seems widespread when the stock market is depressed. Thus since profitability affects a company's stock market valuation it will reduce the readiness of companies to issue shares to finance expansion or takeovers. Table C shows that the takeover boom was associated with an enormous increase in security issues.

TABLE C							
(£ millions)	1960-64 (average)	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970 (1st 3 quarters)
Expenditure on acquisitions and mergers <sup>30</sup>	364	529	570	822	2308	1121	1089
Cash expenditure on acquisitions <sup>31</sup>	n.a.	447	335	454	397	403	242
Issue of ordinary shares <sup>32</sup>	328	264	269	425	1342	625	n.a.
Issue of preference shares and debt <sup>33</sup>	184	386	487	647	491	330	n.a.

Total cash expenditure on acquisitions and trade investments (line 2) was almost unaffected by the huge increase in acquisitions of subsidiaries in 1967 and 1968 or its subsequent falling off in 1969/70. It

<sup>28</sup> There is an interesting discussion of the significance of internal financing by Michael Barnett Brown in Chapters 1 and 2 of K. Coates (ed.), *Can the Workers Run Industry?*, London, 1968.

<sup>29</sup> Sources: *Economic Trends*, April 1962 and *Business Monitor* M3, 1970.

<sup>30</sup> By all Industrial and Commercial Companies (Manufacturing, construction, transport and distribution); before 1969 only quoted companies. Sources: *Trade and Industry*, 2.12.70; *Business Monitor* M3, 1970.

<sup>31</sup> All Industrial and Commercial companies. Source: *Financial Statistics*, December 1970, Table 77.

<sup>32</sup> All quoted Industrial and Commercial Companies with assets over £1m. Source: *Business Monitor* M3, 1970. Figures for 1969 are incomplete and refer to around 98 per cent of the total. Tables 5, 6, 14, 15.

seems likely that the volume of acquisitions in 1969/70 was somewhat reduced by the fall of around one-quarter in share prices which occurred during these years, which in turn must have been partly caused by the adverse trend in profitability. Further falls in profitability are likely, therefore, to slow up the pace of takeovers.

Another feature of this table is the very large volume of long-term debt issues (issues of preference stock were very small). Partly this was associated with the tax advantage of using debt which was increased by the changeover to corporation tax. This greater tax advantage merely highlighted the general feature of long-term debt finance that, provided it is used to earn a rate of return higher than the real interest cost of the debt,<sup>33</sup> it will increase the rate of return earned by shareholders on their investment. This is clearly a very attractive prospect at a time when shareholder rate of return is falling. There are limits, however, which involve a notion of maximum levels of debt which it is safe for companies to raise and beyond which the security of lenders (and perhaps the stability of returns for shareholders) is jeopardized. It seems likely that the possibility of further increases in 'gearing-ratios' (ratios of debt finance to equity) are strictly limited.

Dividend payments on ordinary shares were around 15 per cent higher in 1969 than in 1964; an increase about equal to that in undistributed income before depreciation and stock appreciation. It might be thought that dividends could have been squeezed more by companies, but again the effect on share prices, and thus ability to raise external finance, rules this out as a viable method of easing their liquidity position.

### Foreign investment in Britain

British capitalists might look to takeover by an American (or German or Japanese) company for salvation. To some of them this has already happened. And while problems for the balance of payments and economic control are laid up for the future, the state has usually permitted foreign purchase and investment since in the short run the balance of payments is improved. By 1966 United States financed firms owned 7.2 per cent of the net capital stock of companies in Britain and accounted for 10.5 per cent of total sales in manufacturing. US firms were more concentrated in export production than British firms and accounted for 17.5 per cent of manufactured exports in 1965. This reflected their concentration in three industries: chemicals and petroleum, mechanical engineering and motor vehicles.<sup>34</sup>

While in the early 1950's US companies in Britain were almost twice as profitable as British companies, they have shared in the decline in profit rates since then. In fact, profitability of US firms has fallen a lot more rapidly than that of British firms. The profitability of new US investment between 1950 and 1966 appears to have been scarcely higher than that of British investment, and by 1965 the profitability of US firms was

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<sup>33</sup> Nominal interest rates are no index of real cost when prices are rising.

<sup>34</sup> J. N. Dunning, *The Role of American Investment in the British Economy*, London 1969, pp. 120-1.

only 13 per cent higher than that of British firms in manufacturing, though the differential grew somewhat again in 1966.<sup>35</sup>

The pace of foreign investment in the UK has accelerated since then, though details of its profitability are not available. It remains about 7 per cent of total annual company investment. And it can fairly safely be assumed that there was some tendency for this to have higher than average profitability; at the same time the simultaneous growing volume of UK investment overseas probably produced higher profits than the home average.

There has generally been an outflow on balance to the Common Market and an inflow from the EFTA countries. And although UK investment overseas in the late 1960's was almost twice foreign investment in the UK there was still a large net inflow from the United States.<sup>36</sup>

A good deal of American investment is in new capital stock in existing or new subsidiaries of US companies. The effect of this is to stiffen the breezes of competition for British capital and so increase the pressures on profits. On the other hand, if American investment takes the form of the purchase of existing British companies with low profitability, then British capital would benefit by obtaining funds which could be re-invested more advantageously elsewhere. Such low-earning British assets might be worthwhile purchases for an American corporation when, in an internationally competitive industry, a small British firm is at a disadvantage while a larger American firm can gain from extending its monopoly position. Of course, the benefit of such deals to British capital depends in the end on the price paid; and other capitalists are always much less liable to overcompensate than the state when taking over companies.

Foreign firms operating in Britain may have more strength than British firms in relation both to international competition and to wage demands, since they may be able to shift their investment and even their current production internationally in response to the immediate wage situation. But to a large extent it must be the victim of the same problems and contradictions as British capital. Even a faster rate of foreign investment in Britain, therefore, would not change all or most of the situation we have described, though its logical outcome would be to end British capital's problems by swallowing British capital altogether.

### Sales expenditure

One response of business to falling profits could be to reduce advertising expenditure on the argument that much of this has little or no effect on sales. Total annual advertising expenditure in all media in 1969

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>36</sup> *United Kingdom Balance of Payments 1970, Tables 29 and 30, H.M.S.O.* About half the foreign investment in Britain was out of unremitted profits. This means that there was some stability in the pattern of national origin of this capital. Usually 80 per cent or more of it is American; but the proportion from Western Europe has been growing. In 1968 Western European investment in Britain was £53m while British investment in Western Europe was £92m.

was £520m, and it is hard to envisage a large enough cut in this to make much difference. Nonetheless the increase in expenditure over the previous year was only 5 per cent in money terms instead of what the *Economist* called 'the 10 per cent which industry had looked for. Faced with the old dilemma in times of economic stringency (the *Economist* went on) of whether to increase advertising to keep sales up or cut it to save money most advertisers seem to have plumped for the latter' (16.5.70).

Advertising expenditure is most important in a few industries where it serves the purpose not of expanding demand for the product but of dividing the market between firms for products objectively indistinguishable (tobacco, petrol and detergent). Consequently the reduction in these industries of advertising expenditure requires agreements or even mergers between the competing corporations involved, which, therefore, seem quite probable—with severe results for the press and television companies. The dismissal of some sales and promotion staff might on the same grounds become common in some industries.

### Nationalization and De-nationalization

One of the factors which at different times since the war offset the otherwise threatening implications of a low rate of return on capital was certainly the nationalization by the post-war Labour government of important parts of the capital stock. Not only may this have over-compensated the owners<sup>37</sup> but also it led to the separation of the industrial stock into two parts: the nationalized part was permitted to make lower-than-average profits or even losses and so in effect subsidized the rest. So a low overall rate of return was unequally shared and so the private part could continue to get a higher-than-average rate of profit.<sup>38</sup> Lenin saw this function of nationalization when he pointedly observed: 'A state monopoly in capitalist society is nothing more than a means of increasing and guaranteeing the income of millionaires in one branch of industry or another who are on the verge of bankruptcy.'<sup>39</sup>

The effect of the compensation was once for all, and the effect of the pricing and profit policy was in the end reversed during the 1960's as

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<sup>37</sup> William A. Robson described the compensation for the London Passenger Transport Board as 'generous beyond the dreams of avarice. There was, however, nothing unusual about this extravagantly tender-hearted attitude towards proprietors. Compensation on an excessive scale has been the rule rather than the exception during the last 100 years.' in Robson (ed.) *Problems of Nationalized Industry*, London 1952, p. 286.

<sup>38</sup> This situation is widely misunderstood. One recent analysis suggests that since nationalized industry makes lower than average returns for capital as a whole then less state, and more private, investment would increase the rate of growth. The subsidising aspect is completely ignored. See George Polanyi, *Comparative returns from Investment in nationalised Industries*, London 1968.

<sup>39</sup> Enoch Powell failed to see it when in the Commons debate on the Rolls Royce bankruptcy he said: 'It is a remarkable proposition that state ownership is now considered the natural method for restoring unprofitable assets to profitability' (*Financial Times*, 9.2.71).

efforts were made to steer the nationalized industries towards profitability. The average net yield of nationalized industries has been calculated at about one-third of that in private industry;<sup>40</sup> and within the nationalized industries the low return of fuel and transport offsets the high return of the airlines and the Post Office. These figures depend so much on how previous debts are dealt with that it is more realistic to look at the share of profits in value added (net output). This is shown by the following figures for the share of trading surpluses in value added by public corporations (net of capital consumption and stock appreciation):<sup>41</sup>

1950	1955	1960	1965	1969
-4.3%	-0.4%	7.1%	10.4%	11.9%

Here we can see that the policy of both Labour and Conservative governments to impose profit obligations on nationalized industries has had some effect; the share of profits has risen. The implication is that the subsidizing effect of the nationalized industries on the rest of capital has been eroded. If the share of trading surplus had been the same in 1968 as in 1950, total profits of nationalized industry would have been about £500m less than they were. Some, though of course not all, of this would have benefited profits in the private sector.<sup>42</sup>

In principle both further nationalization and the relaxation of the profitability obligations of the nationalized industries would assist private capital. Ironically, however, both of these would be hard for a Tory government to implement politically. The Rolls Royce nationalization met considerable Tory hostility and was clearly very much influenced by the Ministry of Defence's aero engine requirements.

But there is another alternative open to the Tory government which it is taking, the sale of the more profitable parts of public enterprise to private capital. This can aid profitability in the private sector a little, especially if the prices are too low. The quantitative impact, however, cannot be very great. The life or death of British capitalism will not be decided by whether or not it owns Thomas Cooks and the telegram service.

### Taxation and Public Expenditure

A drastic reduction in taxation on profits offers one possible way out of British capital's dire situation. Given the very low level of post tax profitability it is inconceivable that a substantial part of such a reduction would be passed on in the form of lower (or slower rate of growth of) prices. Suggestions for such a reduction have been offered by the Industrial Policy Group<sup>43</sup> in their 1970 pamphlet on taxation which

<sup>40</sup> Polanyi, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> CBO *National Income* 1970, Tables 13 and 58.

<sup>42</sup> Lower nationalized industry prices (and therefore profits) will not automatically be reflected in higher private sector profits. But that part of nationalized industry output which represents an input into private sector industry is sold at a low price some of which may be handed on to the consumer as lower prices for final products (i.e. higher real wages). A fuller analysis would also take account of government financing.

<sup>43</sup> A group including the heads of many of the largest British companies.



echoed a 1968 CBI proposal that income tax should be treated as having been paid on all profits which had borne corporation tax. It would appear that such a change would reduce the total tax bill for companies by something like £1,000m<sup>44</sup> and this sum could automatically be retained by companies while leaving dividends unchanged.

The CBI's latest suggestion (*The Times*, 29.1.71) is a diversified package including reductions in capital gains tax (£125m), estate duty (£100m), tax discrimination against unearned income (£210m), surtax (£95m) and finally the taxation of gains from the exercise of stock options as capital gains rather than income (£65m). Only their suggestion of a change in the system of investment incentives or reduction of corporation tax, worth £100m, bears directly on the central problem of company profitability; but the rest are liable to ease the financing situation by increasing the savings of profit receivers.

Of course large reductions in company taxation are difficult when a government is urging restraint on incomes, and some part of what is politically feasible has been used up by the present government's reduction in corporation tax. The fact that this change was accompanied by an alteration in investment incentives, so that overall the company sector was estimated by the White Paper (Cmd. 4516) to lose out by £150m in 1974-75, is likely to be too sophisticated a point to be of much use politically. But lose out is what the company sector will do in cash terms, and the effect of the change on the profitability of *new* investment (see the Appendix) is to increase very considerably the total burden of the taxation-plus-incentive system—a burden already increased by the corporation tax and associated investment incentives.

There are ways other than through investment incentives by which government aid is given to industry. Of the expenditure in this area in 1969-70<sup>45</sup> investment incentives account for only half of the £1,174m, the rest being made up of such items as expenditure on research, loans by the Industrial Reorganization Corporation (such as those to Rolls Royce), promotion of exports and the regional employment premium. In fact two important items are to be axed entirely (the IRC and REP) and aircraft projects (before the Rolls Royce bankruptcy) were expected to receive less. Any major re-expansion of state aid to industry, other than by tax incentives which do not smack of interference, is so utterly inconsistent with the Conservatives' policy of 'disengagement' that it can hardly be put forward as a serious way of easing the position caused by low profitability.

If the resources transferred to capital through taxation are not to result in increased overall demand and thus lower unemployment, reductions in public expenditure or increased taxation on labour incomes are necessary. Reduction in expenditure on goods and services makes the resources available directly, but higher charges for services and reductions in subsidies have just the same effect by reducing real wages, and

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<sup>44</sup> Estimated from figures for taxation on companies including and excluding taxes on distributions in Table 26 of *National Income 1970*.

<sup>45</sup> *Public Expenditure 1969-70 to 1974-75*, HMSO Cmd. 4578, Table 2.7.

thus consumption out of labour incomes. The recent reductions in public expenditure programmes involve a cut (as compared with the Labour programme) of £500m by 1974-75 in the area of social services, agricultural price guarantees and housing subsidies, almost all of this involving higher prices or charges rather than expenditure cuts. Certainly there is plenty of scope for more developments of this sort but higher charges carry the disadvantage of stimulating wage demands, whereas reductions in services are very much more difficult politically.

### Devaluation and the Common Market

Devaluation, in 1967, should have offered a chance for the capitalists to increase both their overall profit rate and their share in the national income. Apparently it did neither, though it may have slowed down the trend. Raw material prices, of course, went up. But probably the crucial point was that the working class was quicker than expected to respond to the attack on its real wages which was part of the purpose of the devaluation. Hence, although exports have risen quite substantially, devaluation solved none of British capitalism's problems over profitability though it got the state out of some embarrassment (its debts). It is hardly likely that the experiment will be repeated (short of another balance of payments crisis). Given the combination of intensified international competition and rapid working-class reaction to any attack on real wages, devaluation, in principle an obvious measure to take, might not have favourable results. This is becoming increasingly widely realized.<sup>46</sup>

The question is partly one of magnitude: a really large devaluation could not fail to aid exports and profitability; but at the same time it would offer a strong stimulus to inflation and might provoke retaliatory devaluations. Yet another devaluation of practicable size would not have enough impact on profitability.

In fact it would seem more logical to strengthen the position of British capital in relation to foreign competition by more protectionism.<sup>47</sup> The rate of inflation of prices could then be more easily pushed up into line with wage increases. But protection would be in complete contradiction to the policy of entry to the Common Market which would have precisely the opposite effect (though the exchange rate at which entry is made is an important question). It is very hard, therefore, to understand the Tory party's eagerness for the Common Market given the present position of extreme weakness of British capital. The larger and more international firms which already invest large amounts within the Common Market will gain the advantage of greater freedom guaranteed for their capital movements. For many of the smaller firms the Common Market means certain death. If this is realised in time then perhaps the Labour party now clearly heading for opposition to the EEC will convert itself from the agent of mergers, which it became during the Wilson government, to the ally of small capital.

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<sup>46</sup> See for example Lord T. Balogh 'Labour and Inflation' Fabian Tract No. 403, 1970.

<sup>47</sup> In the end this may become necessary in response to protective legislation now before the US Congress. At present, however, we are far from a trade war.

In this respect there may be an important divergence of interest between British industrial capital and finance capital as it seems likely that the strength and expertise of the latter will allow it to make important gains from entry into the E.E.C. Recently there has been a huge increase in the relative importance of financial companies—the total income of financial companies practically doubled between 1964 and 1969, while the total income of industrial and commercial companies, after allowing for the higher level of stock appreciation and capital consumption, hardly grew at all.<sup>48</sup> No doubt this very rapid growth was partly due to factors like rising interest rates and centralization of private shareholdings in unit trusts etc. which may not persist, but it still seems to represent a significant shift in the structure of British capitalism.

### Inflation

An effort is being made by the CBI and members of the Tory party to make more use of economics as a weapon of mystification by redefining inflation (in reality rising prices) to mean rising wages. Given that the undesirability of inflation is now generally established, the working class can then take the blame. So the CBI has argued in a recent statement that profits are threatened because there is too much inflation (by which they meant rising wages). The truth is the opposite: given the rate of growth of wages and productivity, profits are in fact threatened because there is too little inflation (rising prices). For, in spite of the unprecedentedly large rise in the consumer price index in 1969 and 1970, capital has still not been able to raise prices to the extent necessary to maintain profit rates.

So, of course, all opportunities for price increases will be taken. The *National Institute Economic Review* reported in November 1970 on the basis of impressions of business opinion that 'our expectation is that prices will be adjusted faster in the future and somewhat more than in normal proportion to cost increases, in an effort to restore currently eroded profit margins' (p. 7).

In this situation the Tory government's abandonment of the prices as well as the incomes part of Labour's prices and incomes policy is no surprise.<sup>49</sup> And the situation also probably explains the abandonment of government support for any consumer protection and the complete indifference shown towards the universal price increases accompanying decimalization. These are trivial in relation to the problem however. And a higher rate of inflation, like devaluation, is obstructed by two things: the speed of working class reaction to any fall in real wage levels and the degree of international competition in home and foreign markets. On these grounds British capital will be hoping for a speed up in the rate of inflation in other countries which, though much faster in 1969 and 1970 than in previous years, was still on average below the British level.

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<sup>48</sup> *National Income 1970*, Tables 28 and 29.

<sup>49</sup> The *Investor's Chronicle and Stock Exchange Gazette* welcomed the Government's abandonment of limits of prices: 'It evidently wants to give industry the benefit of the doubt on its need to get profitability right. . . .' (5.2.71).

## Incomes Policy

An effort to halt the erosion of the share of profits was made through the now abandoned incomes policy. This too must be seen in an international context. The share of profits could have been maintained through faster inflation. This however was ruled out by the need to compete in international markets, so wages had to be restrained to match productivity growth. But up to a point the operation of the incomes policy has been a strange irony: far from reducing wages it has probably if anything increased their rate of growth. The lower limit placed on the acceptable norm in order to secure at least nominal trade union co-operation has been so high that, given that all workers have been able to justify on some grounds (low pay, higher productivity) a claim higher than the norm, the rate of increase of money wages remained very fast over the period of incomes policy as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

The fact is that simply as a weapon of wage control incomes policy has exploded in the faces of those who devised it. It has in practice been a seminal instrument of education of the trade-union movement in the basics of economics, which had hitherto been used to bamboozle and mystify. At all levels the movement has gained far greater understanding of the nature and significance of such concepts as inflation, the balance of payments, devaluation, productivity, and particularly the difference between money and real wages. What had been the weapons of mystification became instead powerful weapons of attack in the hands of the working class. As a result of this the revival of incomes policy in any form other than that of a crude wage freeze, for which the Treasury is reputed to be pushing, is scarcely conceivable and would anyway be politically impossible for a Tory government.<sup>51</sup>

But the incomes policy worked the other way as well. In productivity bargaining and similar devices, which seemed to become a more important aspect of the policy than crude wage control, capital found its own form of real wage bargaining. While this has little relevance to recent wage bargains, numerous agreements involving productivity clauses are still in operation.

In another way the incomes policy was one of the factors which encouraged certain professional groups to make greater use of collective bargaining machinery in pressing claims, sometimes with pronounced success. This is a way of attempting to maintain real living standards for some of those hit by the fall in profits.

## Political Implications

Our analysis points to the virtual certainty that the current period of

<sup>50</sup> Claims based on low pay were not necessarily more successful: between 1960 and 1968 the average earnings of the lowest decile of male manual workers fell relative to the national average.

<sup>51</sup> The OECB *Inflation Report* claims that 'the major problem encountered in trying to build up a price-incomes policy is obviously the heavy burden of responsibility it imposes on the social partners' (p. 37).

heightening class struggle will intensify. Capital has lost almost one half of its share of national income in six years and its post-tax real profitability has fallen by nearly two-thirds. This is not the outcome of its kindly and munificent gestures. Quite the reverse: the organized working class, linking a growing economic understanding to a growing militancy, in an environment of stiffening international competition, has, contrary to general opinion, advanced its economic position.<sup>52</sup>

It is important not to exaggerate the nature of the gain which has been made. Since national income in real terms has not been growing fast,<sup>53</sup> a marked increase in the share going to labour has meant that the gain in terms of real incomes is not remarkably large—less in fact than in some countries where the share remained constant. Between 1964 and the first half of 1970 wages and salaries in aggregate grew by almost 47.7 per cent (50 per cent or so on a per capita basis and somewhat higher if the fall in average hours worked of around 3 per cent is included). But the consumer price index grew by 27 per cent over the period, boosted by a rise in taxes on expenditure. A rise in the proportion of personal income taken in taxation (net of benefits received) meant that real consumption rose little more than 11 per cent though the relatively slow rate of non-employment incomes as compared to wages and salaries probably indicates that the consumption of earners grew somewhat more. These limited gains, which were not shared by all sections of the working class,<sup>54</sup> should not hide the fact that real consumption levels would have been correspondingly lower had the reduction in the share of profits not occurred.

It is in increasing its *share* of the national income, at a rate historically unprecedented except for the First World War, that the working class has made a decisive advance. For a number of reasons, firms who have normally been able to hand on their wage increases by raising their prices have this time failed to do so. Given the present structure of British capitalism, these gains appear to be incompatible with its ability to make profits and maintain a reasonable level of investment. For capitalism the maintenance of the present situation would be seriously damaging; the continuation of recent trends for a few more years would be catastrophic.

Capital is now compelled not only to arrest any further decline but to redress some of its recent losses. A measure of the extent of the problem confronting British capital is gained by making a calculation of the

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<sup>52</sup> It is enough in our view to cast some doubt on the not uncommon view expressed in a recent article by Joan Robinson: 'We know that (strong trade unions) can sometimes squeeze profits a little bit for a little time, but in the main, rises in money wage rates are offset by rising prices (percentage gross margins vary much less than the level of money wage rates). In a general historical sense, obviously, the workers' bargaining powers are of dominant importance, but from day to day in the private enterprise system profits have the upper hand.' 'The Relevance of Economic Theory', *Monthly Review*, January, 1971.

<sup>53</sup> GDP at constant factor cost grew at an average of 2.3 per cent between 1964 and 1969. *Economic Trends*, October 1970, Table 9D.

<sup>54</sup> Recent figures from the Child Poverty Action Group suggest that the number of people living below the poverty line has doubled since 1964. The extra unemployed presumably account for a considerable part of this increase.

extent to which prices would have to rise (with wages held constant) if the share of profits was to be restored to its 1964 level. If all the extra profits had to be earned on consumers' expenditure the consumer price index would have to rise by about 8 per cent; or to put it another way if productivity growth is assumed to be at around 3 per cent a year it would require almost three years of zero growth for real wages before margins were restored.<sup>55</sup>

Certain structural economic changes like mergers or new forms of state support will give some help to capital in these circumstances. They will almost certainly not be enough and the capitalists are forced to counter-attack directly against wages and indirectly through prices and unemployment. Neither the structural changes nor the counter-attack against the working class will be easy, and they will both require all possible political backing of which the Industrial Relations Bill is an essential part. For the working class on its part, therefore, the politics which have been capable of making the gains will not be capable of keeping them, let alone of making more.

The already growing pace of this struggle is clearly reflected in the trend of strikes. The total number of stoppages has had two previous post-war peaks—1957 and 1960—in both cases more or less coinciding with a significant increase in labour's share of the national income. From 1966 to 1969 the total number of stoppages rose from 1,937 to 3,116 and then to 3,888 (excluding political strikes) in 1970, involving almost 2 million workers and 10.8 million days lost compared with 2.3 million in 1966. Almost all this rise was in disputes over wage claims which in 1969 accounted for about 50 per cent of all disputes.<sup>56</sup> This growth of strikes reflects both increasing aggressiveness on the part of the working class and increasing resistance on the part of capital.

- Redundancies, while they will be growing in firms like Rolls Royce and its suppliers which are hit by major bankruptcies, are being used also as a defensive measure by firms with acute profitability problems. On February 8th the Industrial Editor of *The Times* predicted that 'the first six months of this year will be characterized by a steady rise in redundancies of all kinds'; he remarked also that the already plentiful evidence of redundancies since late 1970 was 'only the tip of the iceberg, as most employers do not go out of their way to declare proposed sackings in public'.<sup>57</sup>

In their quantity and type wage demands, strikes and redundancies will all be influenced by the level of aggregate demand. The overall economic conditions in which the struggle will develop and be fought out remain to be decided. It is possible that shortage of funds and low profitability will so much reduce investment that unemployment rises very sharply and the power of the working class is thereby partially checked by 'economic' forces. If on the other hand capital attempts to

<sup>55</sup> In 1969–70 this was politically possible in the USA. But it did not follow a wage explosion; and the political consequences may still be to come.

<sup>56</sup> CBO, *Social Trends*, 1970, p. 76; Department of Employment *Gazette*, January 1971.

<sup>57</sup> *The Times*, 8.2.71.

maintain the level of investment and demand, financed perhaps through reduced company taxation, then the demand for labour may hold up and wages will be in the centre of the struggle. It is still imperative to see inflation, rises in indirect taxes, social services cuts and unemployment as different fronts of the same battle.

A struggle about wages, when it is successful in squeezing profits, cannot remain a struggle about wages. Immediately in defensive terms alone and at the purely economic level it must incorporate the question of prices (even if this is taken account of in the wage demand). And if profitability declines then questions about redundancy as a result of mergers or low investment or liquidation will quickly arise. If the political and economic defences of the working class are breached by the capitalist counter-attack then the economic gains, and much else besides, will be lost. The implication of this analysis is that the defence of the gains demand that the economic attack against capital be joined to a political attack, on the basis of which a mass struggle for socialism in Britain can begin.

## APPENDIX

### 1. The Share of Profits

*Share of What.* Row 1 of Table A shows company profits as a proportion of value added by the company sector, after deducting stock appreciation and capital consumption. Value added is the sum of income from employment, profits and rent and thus represents the contribution of the company sector to domestic product. Profits are calculated as a proportion of company value added, rather than total domestic product, in order to abstract from changes in the proportion of domestic product generated in the company sector. In fact between 1950 and 1969 the proportion hardly changed, although Table D shows some substantial changes during sub-periods.

TABLE D

*Shares of value added by various sectors in total domestic incomes\**

(Percentages)	1950	1955	1960	1964	1969
Companies	56.4	58.9	59.8	59.6	57.2
Personal Sector	22.7	19.0	17.6	17.4	17.5
Government	21.9	22.1	22.6	23.0	25.3

\*After allowing for stock appreciation and capital consumption.

The outstanding shifts are from the Personal sector (unincorporated enterprises and the like) to the Company Sector between 1950 and 1955 and from the Company Sector to the Government Sector (Central Government, Local Authorities and Nationalised Industries) between 1964 and 1969. This latter shift was partly accounted for by the nationalisation of the steel industry and partly by the increase in government expenditure in relation to total output. Higher government expenditure, even when confined to expenditure on goods and services, does not necessarily imply a fall in the contribution of the private sector to total output as the additional government expenditure may be on goods and services bought from the private sector (hospital buildings and equipment) rather than on goods and services

themselves generated within the public sector (the services of teachers etc.). While both the causes and results of changes in the proportion of the economy operated by private capital are of considerable interest, they do distort changes in the share of profits in total domestic incomes as an indicator of variations in the distribution of income between labour and capital in the sector where private capital operates.<sup>58</sup>

*Stock Appreciation.* Stock appreciation in a year is the increase in the value of stocks of raw materials, finished goods etc. inherited from the previous year which results from their being valued at higher prices at the end than at the beginning of the year. Due to the normal accounting treatment of stocks this stock appreciation enters into companies' estimates of their profits. It is different in kind from the rest of profit, which represents a *real* return on capital employed, since stock appreciation is merely a *nominal* capital gain which does not represent any increase in the real value of the assets concerned. It does not represent a claim on the year's output (being automatically locked up in an unchanged volume of stocks) and accordingly should be subtracted from profits when calculating that part of the year's output accruing to capital.

*Capital Consumption.* Capital consumption is an estimate of the reduction in the value of assets due to their use in production in the period in question. The estimates for the company sector used here are made by the CSO according to principles outlined in 'National Income Sources and Methods'; it is perhaps of some comfort that these estimates, though independently calculated, appear similar to estimates of depreciation made by companies themselves.<sup>59</sup> It is appropriate to subtract capital consumption from both profits and product in order to derive the share of capital, after provision for replacement of assets, in the net product.

Insistence on calculating the share of profits after deducting stock appreciation and capital consumption is not simply pedantry. Table E shows changes in trading profits of companies for 1966-70 using alternative measures.

TABLE E

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970 <sup>60</sup>
<i>Changes in G.T.P.</i>					
(£ million)					
before deducting S.A. and C.C.	-316	+178	+404	-76	-122
after deduction S.A. but					
before deduction C.C.	-305	+287	+17	-249	-192
after deduction of S.A. and C.C.	-407	+265	-75	-358	n.a.

The massive increases in stock appreciation in 1968, 1969 and 1970 (for which only partial figures are available) mean that the development of profits is very much more adverse after SA is subtracted; the continued increase of capital consumption, which reflects quite high investment levels, means that when CC is subtracted the trend is even worse.

*Industry Composition of Company Value Added.* Since the proportion of profits

<sup>58</sup> Thus between 1964 and 1969 the fall in the share of profits in total domestic incomes (from 12.7 per cent to 8.1 per cent) was, proportionately, slightly greater than the fall in the share of company profits in company value added (from 21.2 per cent to 14.2 per cent) because of the fall in the share of company value added in total domestic incomes (from 59.6 per cent to 57.2 per cent).

<sup>59</sup> The CSO's estimates of capital consumption as a proportion of gross trading profits in the company sector are 15.2 per cent for 1950 and 25.9 per cent in 1968; in the published accounts of quoted companies in the manufacturing sector depreciation was 15.2 per cent of gross trading profits in 1950 and 29.6 per cent in 1968.

<sup>60</sup> 1st half 1970 less 2nd half 1969.



in value added varies from industry to industry changes in the share of profits in company value added can result from shifts in the industrial breakdown of the company sector. Company value added after stock appreciation, but not capital consumption, can be roughly allocated between manufacturing and non-manufacturing, and six broad industry groups can be distinguished in the manufacturing sector.

A year by year analysis would be excessively tedious but it is important to be clear that the fall in the share of profits since 1964 is due to falls in the shares of profits *within* industry groups, rather than shifts in industry composition. Table F illustrates that this is the case (1968 is the latest year for which these figures can be calculated).

TABLE F			
<i>Shares of Profits after stock appreciation in Co. V.A.</i>			
(Percentage)	1964	1968	1968 with 1964 Industry composition
Manufacturing of which	30.5	24.4	25.0
Food, Drink, Tobacco	43.1	35.2	
Chemicals	30.6	43.6	
Metal Manufacture	27.9	28.1	
Engineering	22.8	19.8	
Textiles, Leather, Footwear	24.3	21.3	
Other	24.2	21.8	
Non-Manufacturing	22.2	19.0	
All Company Sector	25.9	22.1	22.4

The share of profits fell proportionately faster in manufacturing than in non-manufacturing; within manufacturing all the industry groups suffered falls in the share of profits except Metal Manufacture for which the figures are particularly rough due to steel nationalisation. Since the importance of Food etc. and Chemicals, with the highest share of profits, declined slightly over the period the recalculated Manufacturing share for 1968, using 1964 weights, is slightly higher than the actual figure. This is partly offset, however, by the rise in the importance of manufacturing as a whole which has a slightly higher share of profits than non-manufacturing, so that for the whole company sector the 1968 share of profits using 1964 weights is only marginally higher than the actual figure.

*Sources.* The Source for all figures on Shares of Profit from 1950-69 is the *National Income* Blue Books for 1961-70, supplemented by *Economic Trends*, Oct. 1970 for figures for the first half of 1970.

## The Rate of Profit

The main series we have used for the rate of profit is the return on the book value of ordinary shareholders' assets for quoted companies in UK manufacturing industry.<sup>61</sup> The book value of ordinary shareholders' assets (BSA) consists of net assets [total book value of the company less current liabilities (amount owing to banks, trade creditors)] less long-term liabilities (nominal value of preference shares, long-term debt and minority interests). Return on shareholders' capital seems the best measure available because we want to focus on the trend of the ordinary shareholders' return, which may diverge from the return on capital employed as a whole if the proportion of fixed interest capital is changing, but which is the strategic return for investment decisions. In fact the trend of the return on net assets (BSA plus long-term

<sup>61</sup> The sources for these series are *Economic Trends*, April 1962 and *Business Monitor* M3, 1970

debt) is very similar to that on BSA though it declines slightly less fast due to the more or less constant return on long-term debt at book value.

There is no alternative but to measure the return on the shareholders' capital at original book value as there are no asset replacement cost figures available. In times of inflation, and with substantial net investment, so that the average age of assets is declining, the value of assets at original cost may grow faster than the value of assets at current replacement cost thus imparting a downward bias to the trend of the return on capital employed when measured at historical rather than replacement cost. Over relatively short periods of five years or so this is most unlikely to make much difference and it is also relevant that return on capital employed at historical cost is the measure used in industry itself and which therefore affects expectations about the profitability of future investment and indicates the need for price increases. The rate of return is measured net of depreciation as charged in the company accounts, which is usually based on standard asset lives rather than tax allowances. An estimate of stock appreciation is also subtracted, again on the grounds that it represents merely a nominal capital gain and in no sense a real return on capital employed.

As some kind of independent check we also calculated the pre-tax return on the current replacement cost of fixed assets and stocks (thus ignoring financial assets), for the company sector as a whole which can be estimated from 1956 onwards from Blue Book figures. From 1956 to 1964 this return fell from 11.1 per cent only to 10.6 per cent in contrast to a 3 percentage point fall in the return on BSA in manufacturing. This suggests that the use of historical cost valuation for assets may accentuate the downward trend. Between 1964 and 1969, however, the Blue Book figures show a fall from 10.6 per cent to 7 per cent, proportionately rather greater than that in the BSA series.

TABLE G

	1950-54	1955-59	1960-64	1966-69
a. Taxes accruing in absence of investment incentives as % of Company Income <sup>62</sup>	49.8	44.1	47.5	47.7
b. Present Value of Investment Incentives as % of cost of Plant & Machinery <sup>63</sup>	37.7	35.2	46.5	41.8
c. Ratio of Fixed Capital formation to Company Income	20.1	28.8	34.0	35.5
d. Actual Taxes as % of Company Income	42.9	35.9	33.4	32.9

For 1966-69 the figures for the post-tax rate of return on BSA include an estimate of investment grants payable on the year's investment in order to make these years as comparable as possible with the rest of the period when investment incentives were given in the form of tax allowances and therefore resulted in an inflated figure for post-tax profits. Up to 1960 the post-tax trend was very much more favourable than the pre-tax trend showing a rise up to 1955 which was held till 1960, in contrast to the fall in the pre-tax

<sup>62</sup> Total taxes, including foreign taxes on profits earned abroad for company sector as a whole from Blue Book plus an estimate of the tax remission as a result of tax allowances on new and existing capital stock (from Blue Book figures for tax allowances multiplied by relevant tax rate) as a proportion of company profits, non-trading income and income earned abroad.

<sup>63</sup> Calculated from rates of annual, initial and investment allowances, investment grant rates and tax rates using a discount rate of 10 per cent.

return from the plateau of 1950-55. The fall in the post-tax return after 1964 was much steeper than the fall in the pre-tax return.

The proportion of company income taken in taxation in a particular year is a complicated function of rates of taxation, levels of investment incentives and the relationship of investment to company income. A simple example will illustrate this. Suppose the rate of taxation is 50 per cent and there is a 50 per cent grant on new investment; if the company undertook no investment the apparent rate of taxation (net of grants received—zero in this case) would be 50 per cent; if company investment equalled company profits the apparent rate of taxation would be 0 per cent. Actual taxation/incentive systems are much more complicated but Table G should be of some help in unravelling the disparate behaviour of pre- and post-tax returns.

The fall in the apparent tax rate (line d) between 1950-54 and 1955-59 was compounded of a very substantial fall in the actual tax rate (line a) and a very sharp increase in the investment level (line c) which more than offset a slight fall in the value of tax allowances per unit of capital expenditure (line b).<sup>44</sup>

Despite a rise in actual tax rates over the period 1960-64 the apparent rate of tax fell considerably owing to a massive increase in the value of unit incentives and a further increase in the rate of investment. 1966-69 saw little change (1965 is excluded as figures are distorted by the transitional provisions of the 1965 Finance Act), with the fall in the rate of incentives being partly offset by the time pattern of their receipts.

As far as the incentive to invest is concerned it is the difference between the actual rate of tax on earnings from the investment (line a), and the proportion of the cost of the investment offset by incentives (line b) which is relevant. It can be seen from the table that the crucial shift occurred in 1960-64 when the gap between these two was narrowed from almost 11 per cent to 1 per cent. Some widening of the gap resulted over the period 1966-69, from the switch to corporation tax and investment grants (and this widening would be greater for non-manufacturing industries). More significant is the fact that the 'Tories' change in corporation tax/investment incentives will reduce the actual average tax rate to around 46.5 per cent and the PV of investment incentives to 32.5 per cent—a wider gap than at any time since 1952-53.

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<sup>44</sup> Investment Incentives on Plant and Machinery (from 1966 to 1969 in manufacturing only) give a fairly good picture of the overall trend in investment incentives on all assets.

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# Introduction to Magri

Lucio Magri's article on Italian Communism in the sixties, published in *Il Manifesto* in late 1970, is for a number of reasons of considerable international significance. The *Manifesto* group was excluded from the PCI in June 1969 for their systematic criticisms of its policies from the left: the ideological background to this break was analysed in NLR 60, which presented a theoretical essay by Magri on problems of the Marxist party. Since that date, the *Manifesto* has become the focus of a preliminary form of national political organization, which seeks to work for a regroupment of the revolutionary left in Italy. The article by Magri published below reflects this development. It was occasioned by the exit from the PCI in the course of recent months of a growing number of regional and trade-union militants, disillusioned by the official line of the Party. The PCI denounced the *Manifesto* violently for 'sapping work' when these resignations occurred: Magri's article starts with a reply to these charges. Its substance, however, is a meticulous analysis of the whole political development of the PCI throughout the last decade.

The class struggle in Italy is unfolding today in a national conjuncture that is unique within the advanced capitalist world. This conjuncture is defined by a peculiar three-fold combination of: 1) a thrusting, boom economy whose rates of growth are well above European and American averages; 2) a huge wave of industrial struggle by the working class, the most turbulent in the continent in the last two years; 3) a bourgeois coalition government that, after nearly a decade in office, is visibly stumbling and disintegrating. The disparity between the economic vitality and the political paralysis of Italian capitalism is especially striking. Between 1958 and 1967, Italian GNP grew by 5.6 per cent per year; per capita income increased over twice as fast as that of Britain. The Italian growth rate for 1971 is projected by the OECD at between 6 per cent and 7 per cent. Italy's export drive in the sixties outpaced that of all other EEC countries; it registered a total gain of some \$1,260 million in engineering goods between 1962-3 and 1967-8, while the USA was proportionately losing \$2,508 million and Britain \$2,814 million of their shares of the world market. This performance, based largely on an enormous reserve army of labour in the South and on a high-productivity, capital-intensive industry in the North, has made Italy second only to Japan in its economic dynamism.

The paradox is that this buoyancy has in the past few years been

accompanied by a broadening avalanche of factory struggles and proletarian militancy that makes British experience look modest indeed. The number of working days lost through strikes in the last four months of 1969 alone was over three times as great as the UK's total in the whole of 1970 (itself the national peak since 1926 and some five times the annual average in the early sixties). A recent ILO Report sets out graphically the comparative industrial combativity of the working class in the leading imperialist countries:

Days Lost per Thousand Persons in Mining, Manufacturing, Construction and Transport

	1963-67 (average)	1969
Italy	1,050	4,110
USA	930	1,390
France	360	200
Japan	200	200
UK	180	510
West Germany	40	20

It is the unprecedented scale of strikes in Italy over the past two years, of course, that has undermined the stability of the political regime in Rome. The Centre-Left alliance formed in 1963 between Christian-Democrats, Social-Democrats, Republicans and Socialists, has come under increasing internal strains as the pressure of the masses in the streets and factories has built up. Trade-union gains in themselves, of course, need not necessarily threaten the profits of Italian capitalism unduly; it is the danger of their escalation into popular social indiscipline and *political* insurgency that is posed so acutely by the proportions of recent struggles on the shop-floor. To avert this peril, major sectors of Christian Democracy have started to work towards an understanding with the PCI—the largest mass organization of the Italian working class today. The PCI has both solicited and responded to these overtures—while simultaneously maintaining sufficient trade-union levels of activity to remind its putative partners of the necessity of an accommodation with it. The path is thus being slowly prepared for a reconciliation of the two mass parties which historically founded the Italian Republic in 1945. Magri's analysis charts both the intricate emergence of this operation, and its objective contradictions. He makes it clear that what is involved in Italy—precisely because of the dynamism of its economy—is not an 'archaic' anti-monopoly coalition of the type the PCF has for years been seeking in France (alliance of the proletariat with the petty-bourgeoisie and small capital), but an 'advanced' compact between modern big industry (i.e. the so-called monopolies themselves), and the central organizations of the proletariat. The full-scale attempt to accomplish this convergence will make Italy a pilot experience for capitalism elsewhere. Its risks for both the contracting parties—as Magri underlines—are formidable, for the autonomy and vitality of the Italian working class has yet to be tamed. Reformism may promise the labour-force as a hostage to big capital; it has yet to show that it can deliver it.

## Italian Communism in the Sixties

The last few weeks have seen a new wave of resignations and expulsions from the Italian Communist Party. Attempts by the PCI leadership to brand the 'scissionist manoeuvres of *Il Manifesto*' as the cause of these phenomena need hardly be taken seriously. We have made no efforts to conceal our own choice: we have opted for the creation of a political and organizational centre of reference outside the PCI, since we believe there is no longer any room for internal opposition within it. We hold that only the existence of such a focus of reference outside the Party will be able to provoke a crisis in its current reformist line, and give this crisis a positive outcome which goes beyond mere disillusionment or simple protest. This will only occur—we have added—if those Communists who are aware of the errors in the current political line of the PCI assume, together with others, the responsibility of building a new organization. To try to work for an alternative line while remaining in the Party no longer has any meaning, at a time when the ambiguities of the 12th Congress have been lifted in a negative sense, and the 'left' inside the Party is acting objectively as a cover

for this. But we are not so presumptuous as to believe that our stand has been enough to provoke the present exit of many militants and leaders from the Party. When *Il Manifesto* first spoke out, we did not even know who many of them were. Even in the case of those who were our allies in the long battle inside the Party, it still remains to be explained why this link is today leading them to radical—and for many of them very painful—decisions, which a year ago they still regarded as premature. The question, however, is more complex than this. Those who work within the Party or in contact with it know that these splinterings represent only the tip of a much larger malaise which by now has invaded the whole Party. It appears under various guises: as protests against particular political choices (letters and resolutions on the *decretone*),<sup>1</sup> as criticisms of the way in which Communist trade-union cadres have led certain struggles (cancellation of the July 7th strike, conduct of the battle for reforms, isolation of factory struggles), or more simply as crises in branch activities, malfunctioning of provincial bodies, confusion and lack of drive from the centre. Berlinguer's address to the Federation Secretaries, and the general drift of that meeting, made plain to anyone who could decipher its ascopian code the general concern felt within the leadership at this far-reaching malaise. Is all this the fruit of our 'disruptive actions'? Or is it not rather due to a shift in the Party's political line, which the rank and file rightly or wrongly feel to be a betrayal both of the Party's past traditions and of their own hopes aroused by these last years?

The fact is that the PCI's attitude to the latest government crisis, to Nixon's visit to Rome, and to the *decretone*, has opened the eyes of the masses to a political operation set in motion some time ago: the expansion of the Centre-Left to include the PCI, the growing integration of the PCI into the complex of forces which—beyond the formal distinctions of government and opposition—in fact share in the running of the Italian State. The PCI is finding it difficult to convince its own rank and file that this 'integration' is really a slanderous invention of 'splitters' when every newspaper and every politician proclaims, from different points of view, that this is indeed what is afoot in Italy today. In the same way ritual denunciation of the collusion between our scissionist activity and the bourgeois press is hardly adequate when, day in and day out, this same press denounces our extremism and awards the Communist Deputies in Parliament top marks for their sense of responsibility and good conduct. It is the political 'turn' of the PCI which has provoked the crisis in the Party. This crisis will deteriorate as the practical consequences of the turn become more apparent.

The leadership of the PCI and certain groups on the far left concur in denying both the 'turn' and the 'crisis'. Both maintain that the current political strategy is simply a logical development of the line the Party has always followed. For have not the Communists, for 25 years now, vaunted their own 'national' role; regarded any confrontation with the

<sup>1</sup> Name given by the Italian press to the swingeing deflationary measures introduced by the Colombo government in August 1970, whose sharp increases in taxation fell mainly on the shoulders of the working class and petty bourgeoisie. The PCI leaders did not resist those measures vigorously, and accepted the government's framework of discussion of them in terms of the 'national interest'.



State system as a disaster; made their re-inclusion in a coalition government their fundamental goal? Both sides, in fact, believe that this choice basically corresponds to the expectations of the whole Party today, to the ideology that has formed its cadres, and to the perspective on which its electoral successes have been founded. Why then should we expect any torment or laceration?

### The Problem of the Dynamic of the PCI

It is indisputable that an insistence on the historical continuity of the Party's evolution contains an important truth. We certainly do not intend to denounce Berlinguer in the name of Togliatti. From the very first number of *Il Manifesto*, we have tried to show that the current reformist line of the PCI is not due to mistaken calculations or momentary confusion on the part of its leadership, but to the organic limitations of a specific strategy rooted in history. It is the expression of a whole complex of social alliances, electoral links, organizational routines, and official positions. This is why we never based our own struggle, when still in the Party, on an appeal to tradition. Nor do we now envisage the construction of a new revolutionary force in terms of of split in the PCI, which separates the healthy from the opportunist elements inside it. We spoke instead of 'a cultural revolution', and of a 'refoundation'—effected in the course of mass struggle and accompanied by a general critical re-evaluation of the past—which would profoundly alter the character and practice of the whole Party, including even those of its best elements. We added that such a refoundation could only come from a synthesis between the Communist Left and the new political and social vanguards which have developed outside the Party.

But this is not to say that the PCI has always been the same as it is today; nor that it represents an ideologically and socially homogeneous force, fully expressed by the official line of its leadership. An analysis of the historical and theoretical origins, and objective social base, of the opportunist degeneration of a political movement need not obscure the dynamics of this degeneration. To identify the strategic and theoretical horizon to which a decadence is related is not to reduce its whole reality to this. It is possible, for example, to reconstruct step by step the inexorable path followed by the Second International up to its final capitulation to the First Imperialist War: but this does not diminish the fact that German Social-Democracy at the end of the 19th century represented a reality, and played a role, very different from those which it embodied after 1914.

Today the Italian Communist Party is undergoing a very similar process. In 1945 it rejected insurrection, and collaborated with bourgeois parties in 'Reconstruction', in framing a new Constitution, and in the governments of 'National Unity' of the immediate post-war period. Given the existing international alignment of forces and the fact that the bourgeois State was in disarray, the PCI—counting on the antagonistic power of the USSR and expecting a revolutionary crisis to develop—combined a constitutional and defensive strategy with organizational and ideological preparation for a future confrontation. The Party was wrong in

its calculations, and succeeded only in fostering the equivocations which were subsequently to lead to unambiguous parliamentarism and opportunism. Nevertheless the organization which is today, in a different fashion and in a different situation, participating with no mental reservations whatever in the 'drive for productivity', is a somewhat different Party. The defensive struggles against unemployment, latifundia, or the *legge truffa*,<sup>2</sup> in the dramatic years of the fifties, do not have the same class meaning as the trade-unionism practised by the PCI today. For even if the objectives of the latter are formally more advanced, the contemporary situation demands a politicization and generalization of the mass movement of a quite different order.

To forget this, to avoid any concrete analysis of the Italian working-class and its organizations, is to construct a purely schematic image of the Communist movement over the last 20 years, which erases the significance of its mass roots and international position, and the reasons for them. More important still, it is to discolour the specificity of the class struggle in this country. For such an approach negates the degree of autonomy and hegemony which has been won by the proletariat over a vast range of social and intellectual forces. Yet this autonomy and hegemony constitute the central knot which Italian capitalism has been unable to cut, and the principal obstacle to the grand reformist operation which is at present under way. Above all, in political terms, such an approach implies a failure to see the possibility and necessity of building a new mass revolutionary force, at a time when strategic blunders and social degeneration are precipitating a change in the nature and class position of the Communist Party. The 'turn' in the PCI's line thus represents a serious problem, which should not be liquidated by propagandistic simplifications. Only the most careful historical and structural analysis of the Party can enable us to disentangle the multiple connections between continuity and rupture in its development, and grasp the complexities both of its ideological tradition and of its present-day reality. We cannot hope to determine to what extent the current turn by the PCI represents a qualitative break, nor at what levels and in what ways it might create rifts in the Party itself, without such a study. A correct analysis must go back in time—at least as far as the end of the Second World War, when the PCI first took on a truly mass character—and above all must go beyond what the Party has said and thought, to establish what it has actually been and done: its concrete relationship with social reality. This task is one on which we have already made a start in *Il Manifesto*,<sup>3</sup> but a comprehensive analysis is yet to be accomplished; there are many facts which are still obscure, and it will take time to complete the work.

<sup>2</sup> The *legge truffa* or 'rigging law' was the name given by the left to the weighted electoral code introduced by the Christian Democrat government at the height of the Cold War, in preparation for the 1953 general election. Under this, a party winning a simple majority of votes would receive two thirds of the seats in parliament. The PCI and PSI mounted a big campaign against the law, but in the event the Christian Democrats failed to win a majority in the election so it never came into operation.

<sup>3</sup> See the article by L. Magri and F. Macone, 'L'Organizzazione Comunista' in *Il Manifesto* No. 4, 1969, which studies the social and regional composition of the PCI, and its organizational structure.

In one fundamental aspect, however, all the necessary elements for judgments are already available to us. Indeed they are part of the direct experience of thousands of Italian militants: the evolution of the Party's line and practice over the past few years.

### The Early Sixties

A well-defined phase in the history of the PCI is now coming to an end. This phase began in the early sixties, when the Party was confronted with two problems which demanded a reconsideration of its strategy: on the one hand, the consolidation in Italy of a highly dynamic and advanced capitalist society, integrated within the European Community, and on the other, the emergence of a new, impetuous cycle of class struggle, bringing forward new demands, new social strata, and new methods of combat.

It was precisely the coexistence of these two phenomena which formed the objective basis of the widening gulf which developed inside the Party, between two divergent political lines. On one side a Right which saw in neo-capitalism, and the room for integration and manoeuvre which it seemed to offer, the opportunity for a reformist insertion of the PCI into the administration of bourgeois power, not only at the governmental apex, but at all levels of society—municipalities, co-operatives, trade-unions, nationalized industries. On the other side, there was a Left which held that the new social struggles and tactical terrain created by neo-capitalism demanded a correspondingly new strategy, capable of posing frontally and radically the problem of overthrowing the whole system. This clash between two lines was itself only a partial and imperfect expression of a much more profound dichotomy. For throughout these years decisive changes were occurring in the very fabric of the Party. On the one hand, the characteristic ideological and organizational structures of the Stalinist era were progressively dismantled; the cadres of the apparatus became increasingly bourgeois; local power cliques came to acquire a new influence; the unions became depoliticized, and initiated a dialogue with the government; the 'red belt' regions (Emilia, Tuscany and Umbria) grew in importance; party organization, both on the shop-floor and among youth, withered. On the other hand, new types of offensive working-class struggle developed (all-inclusive contracts, novel demands), with major participation by Communist trade-union militants; Marxist theoretical discussion revived, again under Communist stimulus; a new anti-imperialist consciousness developed, and came to characterize a whole generation of young Communists. These were years in which the PCI was effectively a self-contained cultural arena—which was the natural breeding-ground both for a coherent reformist tendency and for a new revolutionary force in germination. The ambiguous suspension between reformism and revolution which has always characterized the Party, was thus intensified rather than resolved, and now found expression in the most concrete forms of experience.

In this conflict within the Party, the Left was defeated. This defeat, and the manner of its happening, has determined the subsequent development of the Party from that day to this. For the questions

raised—if not all the answers given—by the Communist Left between 1960 and 1965 offered the Party a historic opportunity to anticipate the crisis then maturing within Italian society, and become attuned to the mass movement which was shortly to emerge. Its analysis of the developed character of Italian capitalism; its critique of reformism in the name of a global alternative to the system; its attempt to identify the anti-capitalist objectives and advanced forms of struggle which were the precondition of an effective mass mobilization; its opposition to the Centre-Left and its mistrust of the structures which it represented; its call for a new strategy based on political struggle in the factories; its critique of the Party's bureaucratic organization and separation from the real vanguards—all these themes anticipated the actual subsequent developments of the class struggle in Italy, and had they been adopted by the PCI, they would have made it a leading and hegemonic force in Italian society.

But the majority of the Party remained either deaf to these suggestions, or incapable of translating them into action. Indeed the Right triumphed even before the clash came into the open or the repressive mechanisms of monolithism within the Party went into operation. Its victory was inscribed in prior deeds, in practice. At the workers' conferences of the PCI in 1961 and 1965, attempts to revive the Party on the shop-floor as an instrument of direct politicization of industrial struggles were partly blocked and partly bungled. During the political 'troubles' of 1962 (the Fanfani Cabinet) and 1963 (the Moro Cabinet and the split in the PSI),<sup>4</sup> the PCI shrank from pressing an attack against the Centre-Left that would have obliged Italian capitalism to confront the social upheavals of the following years from a much more rigid and precarious base. At the 11th Congress of the Party in 1966, the Left finally clashed openly with the Party leadership. It went down to defeat—not because it had chosen the wrong course, but because in the concrete field of political events, faced with choices which could not be postponed, it had already been reduced to a state in which it could do nothing, could construct nothing, and hence could not possibly prevail.

The Left—and we, as members of it at the time, bear our full share of responsibility for this—contributed to its own defeat by fighting too late and in the wrong way. Too late: for, in its dispersal and immaturity it allowed the first acute period of social and political turmoil at the beginning of the sixties to pass, when there were street riots against Tambroni<sup>5</sup>, the formation of the Centre-Left<sup>6</sup>, the first wave of workers'

<sup>4</sup> In January 1964 the left-wing of the PSI, which opposed the party's entry into a bourgeois coalition government in November 1963, seceded and formed the PSUP (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity).

<sup>5</sup> In 1960 the Christian Democrats formed a short-lived government under Tambroni, whose parliamentary majority depended on the support of all the right-wing parties, including Monarchists and Fascists. There were massive popular riots against this Cabinet, notably in Genoa, and the experiment was abandoned for a minority government under Amintore Fanfani which formed the prelude to the Centre-Left—the only viable solution now open to the Christian Democrats.

<sup>6</sup> In 1962 Moro, then Secretary-General of the PCI, persuaded the party to embark on an 'opening to the left', and a three-party coalition was formed with the Republicans and Social-Democrats, supported in Parliament by the Socialist Party (PSI) and with Fanfani as Prime Minister. In 1963 Fanfani was replaced by Moro, and in November of the same year, after Nenni had carried a majority at the PSI congress, the Socialists joined the government coalition and the 'Centre-Left' was inaugurated.

struggles, the political crises throughout the summer of 1963. It did so in order to avoid a head-on collision within the Party: but this collision was inevitable anyway, and its postponement only meant that it was to occur at the most disadvantageous time for the Left—the years of reflux in 1964–65. In the wrong way: it not only failed to follow through its strategic rethinking to its proper crux—a critique of Togliattian gradualism, and a reaffirmation of the extra-institutional, ‘violent’ character of the revolutionary leap forward—it also pursued its line of analysis without taking adequate account of the growing mass movement in the country. It grasped the novel elements of neo-capitalism and the need to combat it with a new strategy, but it failed to see the necessary context of the two processes: the fact that in Italy new and more radical forms of struggle were developing on a truly mass scale. This error in the analysis and perspective of the Left meant that it was seen by the Party in general as a minority tendency, tending towards a retreat and restriction of the Party’s initiative to more rigorous but less operative positions—rather than as a force pulling it outwards towards more advanced struggles and wider alliances. In this sense the Left, no less than the Right, suffered from the politico-ideological conditioning of the long years of a ‘war of position’ and the crushing ideological onslaught of expanding neo-capitalism. It is thus important to bear in mind the *subjective* limits to its struggle. For the bitter experience of defeat did not reflect in any way the real relationship of forces, yet it deeply impressed much of the Left of the party and the movement. Moreover, these same subjective limits ensured that after the defeat and on the eve of developments which should have offered it a decisive chance for a counter-offensive, the Left abandoned the fight at the 11th Congress, and submitted while the leadership eliminated it from the effective apparatus of the Party, or neutralized it as a faded administrative partner in its bureaucratic power.

### Towards the Twelfth Congress

The beginning of 1968 ushered in a new political era in Italy: the wave of anti-imperialist demonstrations, the explosion of the student movement, the strikes for pensions. These events shook a balance of forces that had been stable for 20 years. Mass struggles now rose to a qualitatively new anti-capitalist level. The PCI was thus faced with a singular and contradictory situation. It was the only Communist Party in Europe which was not, and did not feel itself to be, foreign to this new wave of struggles, for it had in fact helped to prepare them. It even had some ongoing relationship to the new political radicalism that these struggles implied, for although it rejected this radicalism, it had at least been discussing it for some time. This history of previous participation prevented the PCI from simply refusing and repressing the movement, as the PCF was able to do in France. The PCI would have run the risk of splitting its own ranks and cutting itself off from the masses, if it had done this. At the same time, there was no longer any inner-party force with either the strength or will to drive these novel struggles forward, to anticipate their developments, or to offer them a strategy. There was no group within the Party capable of contesting the official line, or imposing serious changes in its organization and style of work.

For the whole of the first phase—from spring 1968 to early 1969—the PCI thus adopted an extremely open, yet superficial attitude towards the mass struggles of the movement. It never once took up the challenge of the student movement. It tried to reabsorb cadres who were pulsing with the new experiences of struggle into rank and file activities or its youth organizations. It tacked its immediate political positions (1968 electoral campaign, slogan of an 'alternative', attitude towards China and Cuba) somewhat to the prevailing wind from the 'left'.

There was thus a considerable period of 'openness', that was not purely tactical, but which never affected the substance of the Party's political line or its internal power structure. This apparent openness was possible because the conflicts under way in Italy assumed a 'creeping' character rather than a 'cataclysmic' one, and hence did not precipitate a general political crisis, as they did in May 1968 in France. Consequently they did not enforce rapid and radical political choices. The PCI was thus given a great deal of time to recast its strategy and organization for future decisive tests, if it had wanted to. Instead, it used this objective leeway for parasitic manoeuvres and seizures on to whatever the struggle from below happened to throw up. The 'opening to the left' thus provoked neither a genuine revival of inner-party debate, nor the formation of a new batch of leading cadres. It merely gave rise to a more widespread and superficial phenomenon—a vague contagion of 'suggestions' from the left, and a shift in the balance of internal power to the middle generation in the apparatus, symbolized by Berlinguer, who used this propitious conjuncture to oust the ancient notables of the Right from their inordinate predominance in the leadership of the Party.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia then restricted this 'renewal' still further, and rendered it more confused politically. Using spokesmen and arguments of the left as a cover, the Party leadership criticized the USSR in a fundamentally rightist and superficial fashion. In fact, only a few months before the 12th Congress, this leadership had already scored three important successes. It had gained political credit in the eyes of bourgeois politicians for the initial spiral towards a new 'governmental majority', renewing a 'democratic dialogue' at the institutional level (later undermined by the split in the PSU<sup>7</sup> and the crisis of the Doroteo faction inside the Christian-Democratic Party<sup>8</sup>); it had driven an unbridgeable wedge between the new Left and a 'Stalinist' current which might otherwise have converged dangerously close over the inner-party situation and the relationship of the party to mass struggle; and finally it had used the 'peril of a complete break with the USSR' to impose unity at all costs on the Central Committee before

<sup>7</sup> In 1966 the PSI and PSDI (Social Democrats)—who had split in 1947—recombined as the PSU (United Socialist Party). The reconciliation was brief and stormy, and the PSU split again in 1969; the fundamental disagreement was—as it had always been—on the attitude to be adopted towards the PCI.

<sup>8</sup> In the late summer of 1969 the dominant *doroteo* faction of the DC (called after the monastery where it was formed) split. The crisis was precipitated by Moro, who succeeded with the aim of creating a unified 'left' faction within the party—an enterprise in which he has not been successful. Once again, the underlying issue is that of policy towards the PCI.

the impending Congress. The Left now paid dearly for yet another of its political weaknesses: it had avoided a clash on international questions, particularly on the USSR, at a time when the Sino-Soviet dispute and the start of the 'Cultural Revolution' could have produced a real ideological clarification in the Party and a realignment of its internal forces.

Nevertheless, however superficial and contradictory, the 'opening' of those few months left its mark. It fostered an osmosis between the Party and the mass movement outside it, above all amongst the rank and file militants, which could not easily be neutralized: the body of the Party is now more infected with 'extremist' ideas than before 1968. The particular polarization which shelters the PCI from any internal contradictions in France—all 'moderate' forces inside the CP, all 'extremist' forces outside—has not occurred in Italy. Even more importantly, the 'opening' helped to render possible, across the Party and the trade unions—or at least with their neutrality—an exchange of political and organizational experience between the student movement and the working-class.

The 12th Party Congress of 1968, which in appearance ratified the politics of an 'opening to the left' (in the Central Committee theses, pre-Congressional debate, provincial Federations, and Berlinguer's closing speech), in reality sealed the transition to a new phase and a different line. Longo's Report took the whole Congress by surprise, with its unblushing proposal to slow down the movement and turn the victory at the polls<sup>9</sup> and the current impetus of the masses into a new parliamentary majority which include the PCI. The most numerous and important section of the Left (led by Ingrao) accepted a subordinate role, allowing itself to be absorbed into the administrative apparatus presided over by Berlinguer. The composition of the national leadership elected by the Congress marked a halt to the induction of new cadres: the eventual outcome merely came down to a sagacious compromise between Berlinguer and the traditional Right. The Youth Federation was politically decapitated and liquidated.

The consequences of the Congress became evident in the next months which proved in the event politically decisive. For two processes were maturing which would affect the whole development of the political situation in Italy, and to which the PCI's own response would be crucial: the new upsurge of workers' struggles, and the crisis of the governmental coalition led by Rumor<sup>10</sup>. It was precisely the crystallization of these processes which now prompted a decisive turn in the Party's line. At a time when all the conditions were ripe, it deliberately stood back and refused an extraordinary opportunity to drive towards an alternative to the system.

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<sup>9</sup> At the general elections of 1968, the PCI had registered considerable advances at the expense of the PSI and other parties.

<sup>10</sup> The Cabinet presided over by the Christian-Democrat Mario Rumor resigned in the summer of 1970.

## The Great Upsurge of 1969

Both the PCI and the trade unions adopted a prudent attitude towards the new wave of factory struggles. For the first time in 20 years, they explicitly situated themselves at the tail rather than at the head of the movement, braking rather than stimulating it. The flood of company strikes in the spring of 1969 (Rhodiatoce, Pirelli, Porto Marghera, Fiat) saw the proletarian vanguards in the factories clash with the moderation of their own industrial organizations to the point of total rupture. The forms and demands of these struggles (egalitarian pay increases, control over speed-ups, tough strikes) were later to become the official slogans of the 'hot autumn' (*autunno caldo*) of 1969: but they were imposed by the masses on a dubious and recalcitrant leadership. The notion of social struggles—inaugurated by the strikes over pensions and wage-zones<sup>11</sup>—was hastily abandoned in case it should spark shop-floor struggles into a general political upheaval. The new structures of direct democracy (factory delegates) emerged after some delay, without leadership: no sooner had they come into being than the Party tried to whittle them down to narrow trade-unionist and plant functions. It thus blocked their evident tendency towards a generalization and politicization of the movement (for example, the agricultural labourers' campaign for employment, residents' associations and squatters' committees, rank and file groups of technicians and intellectuals).

Even when in the autumn of 1969 the trade unions did consent to endorse a radicalization of struggles, they were careful not to stimulate their political development: immediate demands were all they would back. They informed the masses that a political outlet should be sought later and elsewhere, outside the factory and inside parliament. The possibility of utilizing the pressures exerted from below by the workers, to generalize and unify the movement (in the direction of the peasants, the students, the South) was not even considered.

The Party's attitude to the crisis of the governmental parties, which erupted at this time, was analogous. There was now an historic opportunity of sapping the political unity of the Catholic bloc (split between ACLI and DC,<sup>12</sup> radicalization of the CISL left,<sup>13</sup> the outbreak of student dissent), and of cutting away the influence of Social Democracy (split in the PSU,<sup>14</sup> ideological crisis within the reformist intelligentsia). But the Communist leadership deliberately rejected any such prospect. It preferred to aim at a gradual recuperation and attraction of the DC and PSI towards itself. It accepted the Christian Democrat Left, up and to including Moro's faction,<sup>15</sup> as a basic Catholic interlocutor. It denounced the dissolution of Parliament as the main danger of the hour. It

<sup>11</sup> Italy is administratively divided into different geographical zones for the purposes of official wage-negotiations. The South is the bottom category.

<sup>12</sup> The ACLI is the Catholic Workers' Association, which ended its ties to the DC in 1969.

<sup>13</sup> The CISL is the Catholic trade-union federation in Italy, the second largest after the Communist-led CGIL.

<sup>14</sup> See note 7 above.

<sup>15</sup> Aldo Moro, one of the central politicians of the Christian-Democrat Party, was the original architect of the Centre-Left formula and a conventional bourgeois conservative. In recent months he has shifted tactically towards the 'left', and has floated the idea of co-operation with the PCI.



proposed a DC-PSI government as a possible objective, and deemed the internal evolution of the PSI to be the major axis of a new political solution for the country. The themes ventilated at the 12th Congress—a new historical bloc; a reconstruction of political forces in the vortex of social struggles; an alternative to the system; a critique of representative democracy—all were quietly shelved by the Party leadership. To match its new domestic line in the international arena, the leadership now accepted so-called 'normalization' in Czechoslovakia and steered the Party back towards the Russian fold (participation in the Moscow Conference of pro-Soviet Communist Parties).

These options, though temporarily clouded by the impetus of the masses, thus already prefigured a rapid subsequent evolution to the right. For the impact of proletarian struggles on the Italian economy, the new relationship of forces they had created inside the factories, and the pressure these exerted outwards on the whole social fabric, were bound to precipitate a political and economic crisis which would fatally dispel the ambiguities of the PCI. The bomb explosions in Milan<sup>16</sup> and the fall of the first Rumor Cabinet were enough to make the alternatives clear: the Party had either to accept a radicalization of the clash of the masses with the system, or undertake to police the movement and stifle the crisis. Since the first course seemed much more risky, for it had done absolutely nothing to prepare for such an eventuality, which contradicted its most entrenched traditions, the PCI naturally chose the second.

Once collective contracts were signed, it issued the slogan: 'from factory struggles to social struggles'. In practice this meant two things. On the one hand, it gradually allowed the Party and trade unions to abandon the fight over the terrain which these contracts had left undefined (hours, piece-rates, job security and grading), and where management were seeking to recover their ground. Instead of developing a shop-floor offensive over these issues, the Party restricted itself to defensive immediate demands, and isolated the surviving advanced sectors of struggle. On the other hand, it launched a 'social campaign' of a classically reformist type: generic objectives capable only of re-stabilizing the system; organized action limited to pressure for legislative deals and decrees; conduct of the whole affair transferred to the confederal councils of the trade unions. This type of leadership, at a time when the confrontation of the masses with capital was becoming general and political, was perhaps intended to liquidate the 'subversive' aspects of the movement. In fact, its effect was to sap its total power, to pave the way for corporatism and to 'wear out' the masses. There now ensued the incredible handling of the strikes for reforms—suspended throughout the electoral period in June 1969, cancelled on July 7th, then implemented in October the very morning after an agreement had been reached with the government; the confused bungling of the teachers' and public employees' disputes; the lackadaisical and belated generalization of the big company struggles (Fiat, Rhodiatocce, Chatillon, Alfa-Romeo); the feeble and local response to repression (Fatme,

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<sup>16</sup> Blamed by the police on Anarchists, the explosions have been widely suspected by the Italian press to be a provocation by the neo-fascist Right.

Rhodiatoce, Piaggio); the total absence of any influence in the Southern revolts (Reggio Calabria). Such were the fruits of a political line both irresponsible and opportunist.

The other side of this coin was a succession of overtures towards the Christian Democrats and the Centre-Left. Confronted with a government crisis, after two long years of unprecedented class mobilization, the PCI now asked for nothing more than a 'government which would establish the regions'<sup>17</sup>. Over and above its obsessive fear of a dissolution of Parliament, which might radicalize the social conflict in the country, the Party seems to have hoped that it could translate 'trade-union victory' into another 'electoral victory'. This was merely the final, parliamentarist version of a dwindling 'offensive' posture. The result of its conduct of the campaign for the partial elections in June,<sup>18</sup> and of the struggle throughout the country, was in fact to demoralize opposition from the left, and to promote a recovery of the PSI. Its failure in the poll of June 7th was then used by the Communist leadership precisely as an incentive to accelerate its incorporation into the established political system at both municipal and national level. The major article published by Berlinguer in *Unità* in July,<sup>19</sup> in which he systematically set out the attitude of the PCI to the new governmental crisis, concluded this evolution. It revealed a new phase in the Party's development: a political *turn*.

### The Right Turn and its Strategic Meaning

Berlinguer's article represented, obviously enough, a clamorous abandonment of the orientation of the 12th Congress and of specific attitudes which were very much in evidence there. But the new turn was deeper and more far-reaching than this. The 'left' accents of the 12th Congress were more than just a final maximalist echo: they were the response of the Party, above all of one section of the Party, to a situation compounded of great mass anti-capitalist struggles, the formation of a new political and social vanguard to the left of the PCI, and a grave crisis in the equilibrium of bourgeois power. The reversion, in this particular situation, to a prudent reformism is not therefore a simple return to a prior point of departure: it is the means towards a precise political end—the participation of the PCI in the administration of the State. For an analogy, we must go back to the Popular Front in France in the 1930's, or to Togliatti's veto of a rising in Italy in 1944.

A comparison with these fateful episodes, however, also underlines the novelty of the present situation. This does not consist in the fact that the PCI takes upon itself the defence of the 'national interest', in a

<sup>17</sup> The establishment of local 'regional' administrations was promised by the Constitution of 1945, but was always blocked by the Christian-Democrat Party because it would give the PCI regional control of parts of Central Italy, and hence has always been one of the main parliamentary demands of the latter. The recent implementation of regional governments was thus a concession, among other things, to the PCI.

<sup>18</sup> In June 1970, there were partial elections to the Italian Parliament, in which for the first time since the early fifties the PCI vote receded, rather than increased.

<sup>19</sup> This article was published in *Unità*, July 17th, 1970.

moment of acute crisis; that it puts the onus for avoiding an economic depression on the working class; that it accepts the prospect of participating in a coalition government within a bourgeois institutional framework. These things have always been so. What is new, by contrast, is that *the Communist leadership is for the first time well aware of the price to be paid for such participation, if it is to be serious and durable, and is quite prepared to pay it.* Berlinguer's article amounts to a self-criticism of Communist Frontism, which accepts the need to liquidate the maximalist elements and hegemonic fantasies that always haunted the Popular Fronts in the past: in a word, all that made them a defective and losing strategy, yet one still subjectively revolutionary and objectively antagonistic to the system.

This self-criticism focuses on two essential issues. *Firstly*, the PCI now renounces its traditional aim of provoking a limited but sufficient shake-up of the bourgeois political parties to split the Christian Democrat Party and thereby permit its own leadership of a government of 'advanced democracy', supposed to progress towards the threshold of a change in the system. Henceforward the objective of the PCI is to participate in an alliance in which the fundamental levers of powers stay in the hands of Christian Democracy. More than this: *it is now the unity of the Christian Democrat Party, and a shift of its internal axis to domesticate the recidivist right, that becomes the indispensable guarantee for the Communist project to proceed within a framework of 'democratic' stability.* The indirect support given the present Colombo Cabinet, and the dialogue with Moro and Andreotti,<sup>20</sup> testify to the active contribution of the PCI towards this shared goal: a gradual shift of the DC towards the 'left', which does not affect its essential unity.

*Secondly*, the PCI has now radically altered the social bloc, and thus the programmatic perspective, which its future 'coalition government' is designed to express. *The old alliance of 'anti-monopoly' forces has been dropped today. The new objective is a convergence between the working class and the 'advanced' wing of big capital, on a common economic programme for the elimination of parasitism and the development of social services, that will harmoniously reconcile the exigencies of productivity and the needs of the workers, within the system.* The precondition of such a convergence is not a general social truce (not even the capitalists are asking for one), but the restoration of order in the factories, the costing of reforms against resources necessary to finance them, and the reabsorption or repression of the subversive impetus of the mass movement. The PCI has shown itself disposed to this bargain. It is willing to pay the full price, and deliberately risk the emergence of an opposition to the system on its left.

In the light of this current political operation, the strategy pursued by the PCI leadership over the past few years now becomes clear. Its 'openness' towards the mass movement of 1968-69 no longer appears just as a tactical ruse, or as a momentary confusion, but as an essential element of its fundamental goal: to promote the necessary perturbation

<sup>20</sup> Giulio Andreotti, traditionally one of the most vociferously right-wing of Christian Democrat bosses and the key henchman of the Vatican in the Party, has recently posed as a 'progressive interlocutor' of the PCI, in an even more patent somersault than that of Moro, for which see note 15 above.

of the ranks of the bourgeois coalition to prepare the way for the Party's entry into the government. The 'right turn' of the last few months could become so clear-cut only because the preceding years had created a situation in which this option now appeared both alluring (in terms of office) and necessary (to avert a crisis in the political system). Outflanking Amendola on the right,<sup>21</sup> Berlinguer has achieved the feat of creating an immediate political perspective which can simultaneously unite the Party leadership and alter the fundamental nature and position of the Party without provoking serious dissension. Formally, this appears to be a brilliant political operation. But looked at a little more closely, and in its true social context, this 'brilliance' is precisely what constitutes the fragility and sterility of the whole manoeuvre. Berlinguer is to Togliatti what Napoleon III was to Napoleon I.

The PCI, in fact, is abandoning the secure monopoly it had of an immobile opposition, such as provides the strength of the PCF, for an undertaking that is much more ambitious and compromising. This undertaking is now close to the point of no return. For if the PCI were henceforward to revert to any alternative line, or even merely to a negative opposition, it would lose heavily on the right without regaining any political credibility on the left. At the same time, it is becoming more difficult with every day that passes for the DC to reconstitute *its* power on a classically conservative basis, without now running the risk of an internal split. Thus although the game has its dangers for both protagonists, they can only try to resolve these contradictions by accelerating its pace. The two Parties are now only waiting for Saragat's Presidential mandate to expire, eliminating the threat of a dissolution of Parliament,<sup>22</sup> to settle matters between them.

### The Fragility of the Present Operation

But for such a speedy and explicit integration of the PCI to take place, without provoking radical crises either in the PCI or institutional stability as such, the conditions for a serious reformist political system must exist. This reformism must be capable not only of ensuring swift economic growth, but of maintaining the framework of parliamentary democracy, and satisfying the material needs and demands of the masses. In Italy today, these conditions do not exist. The possibilities for a rapid expansion of the economy are slight. The leeway for a further redistribution of income is marginal, at least until considerable and general increases in productivity are achieved. The needs that have been accumulated, the demands that have been articulated, and the habits of struggle that have been acquired by the masses are formidable. The real strongholds of wealth cannot be attacked without damaging the basic mechanisms of the capitalist system. The institutional apparatus of the State is incompetent and paralytic. The DC and the PCI do not look like political forces capable of a coherent and rational implementation of a

<sup>21</sup> Giorgio Amendola is the traditional champion of the extreme Right of the PCI.

<sup>22</sup> Giuseppe Saragat, the former Social-Democrat leader, will cease to be President of Italy in October 1971. The election of a new President is a major parliamentary contest, in which PCI votes will be necessary for the winner (as they were for Saragat in 1964). The two main rival candidates are currently Moro and Fanfani.

programme transcending their own organizational interests and those of their electorates. The international integration of world capitalism rigorously conditions the basic course of development within each national State.

These difficulties have also been paradoxically exacerbated by the Communist political record over the past few years. By giving apparent rein to the mass movement, and not blocking its radicalization, Berlinguer's leadership has ended by restricting its own room for manoeuvre. For the factory struggles have eroded the scope for reformist concessions: the partial victories wrung from the system have not only absorbed real resources from capital but have stimulated new claims, generalized new forms of mass struggle, and created new levels of working-class autonomy. These have then progressively infected the whole fabric of society. Thus the latent social revolt in the South has exploded into new modes of violent action, which—in the absence of leadership from the left—have been confiscated by reactionary forces (Reggio Calabria). The parasitic middle class is showing itself capable of putting up a stubborn defence when its own sectional interests are threatened. In the sphere of organized politics itself, a wide range of contestation has been allowed to develop, expressed by a fresh generation of militants with new ideas and values. Unchecked, the virus of 'extremism' has penetrated trade-union organizations, the Catholic Left, and the rank and file of the PCI itself. Thus the PCI's strategy of integration, which has little political cover or safety-margin, is confronted by a vast, if confused and divided, block of opposition to it on the left—on an infinitely greater scale than in 1944. Considered in this light, Amendola's brusque and carping criticisms of Berlinguer's 'opportunism' in feinting to the left in the past two years, have not been without foundation: the Party's failure to control the radicalization of the mass movement earlier has made its current operation very risky indeed.

In the course of the last few months these risks have become evident. It is all very well for Berlinguer to extol a shift to the left in the government for which his policies claim credit. For the masses this 'shift' has meant, since the autumn, an intensified rate of exploitation, an aggravation of the Southern problem, a rise in the cost of living, a wave of repression inside and outside the factories, and 700 million *lire* in new taxes. By way of compensation, what have they received? Promises of reforms which have lost their appeal even before they are implemented; the acceptance of divorce; participation by the PCI in regional administrations; and petty concessions in foreign policy that do not even match the diplomacy of a Pompidou. It is possible that the system is capable of granting more than this, especially if the PCI displays willingness to give it firmer support. Yet the disproportion between the scale and pace of the whole political operation under way, and the package of possible practical measures that could emerge from it, appears to a wide one.

This is not to say that the reformist strategy of the PCI will collapse within the next few months. Given the resolute drive which the leadership is putting behind its project, and the prestigious patrimony it has at its disposal; given that even in the mass movement there objectively

exists a reformist component; given that capitalist society has powerful integrating mechanisms and that its current crisis in Italy is not a general paralysis of production—the strategy of incorporation can certainly proceed for some time. It will only be demystified progressively and at the cost of serious setbacks. In this sense, the right turn of the PCI is not a cause for rejoicing: it will complicate and delay the construction of an anti-capitalist alternative.

What is certain, however, is that the grand political operation now under way between Italy's two largest Parties is not going to offer a permanent solution to the present crisis in Italian capitalism. Nor can it express, even in a temporary form, the actual needs and aspirations of the proletariat. There is a profound and material contradiction between the policy of the Communist Party and its social base. Today it is possible to challenge the supremacy of the former over the latter, and bring into being a new organized political force of the Italian working class. The rapid development of the situation makes this goal both realistic and necessary. Realistic, because the preliminary conditions for it already exist; necessary, because otherwise the whole tradition of class autonomy that is the heritage of the Italian proletariat will be lost. In a situation that has become more difficult for it than ever, it is essential that the working class should not have to start again from zero.

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## Interview with Talal Saad and Said Seif on the political situation in Oman and Dhofar

### *introduction*

In February 1971 the Conservative Government announced its plans to withdraw British forces from the Persian Gulf by the end of 1971, in accordance with a plan originally drawn up by the Wilson government in January 1968 and accepted by the Conservatives only after they had come into office. Britain, formally in control of nine Gulf states, was to hand independence to them. The British had hoped to unite this group of states into a neo-colonial federation, the Union of Arab Emirates, but internal disagreements between the rulers have so far prevented this Union from emerging in its intended form.

The British 'withdrawal' is in many ways less significant than is officially claimed. Britain pretends that the Sultanate of Oman is an independent state and will therefore keep her military installations there after 1971, and continue to run the Sultan's army. In the areas she is formally quitting Britain will continue to train and arm the local armies, either through defence agreements or through mercenaries organized by covert government agencies. The us is also prepared to back up local reactionary forces: it has an air base in Saudi Arabia, at Dahrán, and naval facilities on the island of Bahrein. These imperialist military forces could be made available to local states if their own forces were unable to suppress oppositions, and if the leading neo-colonial régimes in the area, Iran and Saudi Arabia, were unable to provide necessary support.

The active revolutionary movements in the area fall into three groups: Communist Parties (Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Iran, Iraq); Ba'thi revolutionary groups (Bahrein, Ras al-Kheima) and 'Marxist-Leninist' organizations. The third group are the most powerful. They are former branches of the pan-Arab party, the Arab Nationalist Movement, which desintegrated in 1968. Three of these former branches are active in the Gulf area: the *Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf*, in Dhofar; the *National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf*, in Oman; and the *Popular Revolutionary Movement*, in Trucial Oman, Bahrein, Qatar and Kuwait. The PFLOAG is by far the most important of these, and after five years of guerrilla war, it controls almost the whole of Dhofar. The British were forced in July 1970 to depose the reigning Sultan Said and install his son Qabus instead, in an attempt to stem the opposition by token reforms and by opening Oman to colonial capitalist development of the kind taking place elsewhere in the Gulf. The interview we print here was recorded on February 21st, 1971 and covers the major strategic conceptions of the allied revolutionary groups in the area. Talal Saad is a member of the General Command of PFLOAG, and Said Seif is a member of the PRM.

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*In July of last year the British overthrew Said bin Taimur and put in his son Qabus. What have the British done since then, and what have Qabus' policies been?*

TALAL SAAD: What happened in July 1970 was not unexpected; it was the result of a long-term plan, drawn up by British imperialism to contain, and then liquidate, the prevailing revolutionary trend. In this sense, the overthrow of Said bin Taimur was part of a double plan. First there was the plan for a so-called 'Omani constitutional monarchy'; this had long been advocated by Tariq bin Taimur, Said's brother. The second plan was obviously that of the Union of Arab Emirates. Both were political fronts for British neo-colonialism in the area, in a desperate attempt to advance seemingly patriotic régimes. There were two major reasons why the British were driven to replace Said by his son. The first was the success achieved by the revolution in Dhofar; this had begun to constitute a serious threat to the interests of imperialism in the whole area. In contrast, the reactionary régime of Said bin Taimur had become incapable of coping with the rising tide of revolution in Dhofar. A second equally important cause was the beginning of armed struggle in Oman proper under the leadership of the National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf. After Said's replacement, the British tried to undermine the revolution by a series of so-called reforms. In Salala itself, and in the plain around Salala, one or two clinics were opened, and some land was reclaimed. But in the mountains controlled by the Front British imperialism was unable to



carry out even these minimal reforms, because of the Front's control over the mountains. The British also tried to divide the revolution and attract some of the tribesmen, but that too was a miserable failure. Militarily, British imperialism stepped up its attacks, especially its genocidal assault on the civil population in Dhofar. Recently, in the western sector, there was an attack on a civilian settlement at Mbrot; some people were wounded and many cattle were killed. The western part of the liberated area has been subjected to constant strafing and bombing of an indiscriminate kind, in an attempt to terrify the civilian population and weaken their support for the revolution.

*The British have announced their plans to try to cut the supply lines between South Yemen and Dhofar in the way that the Americans are trying to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail in Indo-China. What have they done in this respect?*

TALAL SAAD: There is an overall concentrated plan to liquidate the revolution throughout the Gulf, and all the forces of reaction in the area have been working in this direction. This plan is being carried out as follows. First, Saudi Arabia is arming and financing mercenaries and these forces, together with Saudi Arabia's own army, are making constant raids into the fifth and sixth provinces of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The aim of this is to liquidate the revolutionary régime in South Yemen and to deprive the revolution in the Gulf of its secure base. In addition, there has been constant bombing of the region around Hauf, the South Yemeni village on the borders of Dhofar, and of the track that links South Yemen to the front lines of the Dhofari revolution, and which crosses the western sector of the liberated areas.

*One of the causes of the overthrow of Said, as Talal Saad has said, was the outbreak of armed struggle in Oman itself. Now in Oman in the 1950's there was a tribal rebellion, led by the Imam Ghalib. Could you say what your relationship to that was, since it was regarded in the west as an anti-imperialist struggle and was supported by revolutionaries? What were the events which precipitated the June crisis in Oman, and what has happened since then? What have Qabus and Tariq been trying to do?*

SAID SEIF: The most important thing to say about Imam Ghalib's movement is that it represented a clash *within* the imperialist camp. It was a conflict between the Imam and Said bin Taimur, i.e. a conflict between an absolute régime and a caricature of that obsolete régime, represented by the Imam himself. When we say that it is a conflict within the imperialist camp, we mean that behind Said bin Taimur and Imam Ghalib were Britain on the one hand and America and Saudi Arabia on the other. However, although the Imam's movement represented a clash within the imperialist camp, it did have sizeable mass support; the masses who supported the Imam supported him mainly as a patriotic reaction to the British occupation of the interior of Oman in 1954.

As for the events of June 1970, it was clear by then that Britain was depending on an obsolete régime that was increasingly in contradiction with social and economic developments in the Gulf as a whole.

Two opposition forces stood against this régime. One force argued that the best way to counter the revolution was by making certain concessions and certain reforms. This was the reactionary opposition to Said bin Taimur. The second opposition was the progressive opposition; it opposed the whole structure of Omani society and the organic ties that united this society and the Said dynasty to British imperialism. These were two local Arab opposition forces. On the other hand, there had traditionally been two trends among the British imperialists in the area. One trend was a traditionalist, colonialist trend, consisting mainly of people who had come from India and were personal advisers to the Sultan; they defended the policy of maintaining Said in office and at times justified all he stood for. Against these traditionalists there stood a group of modernists who wanted to rely not on an autocratic régime like Said's but on the new middle class, which was to be the major basis for the preservation of neo-colonialism in the area. What tipped the scales in favour of the second, modernist, trend was the launching of armed struggle in the interior of Oman in June 1970. It was at this time that Shell felt that its interests were at risk, and pressed for Britain to back the 'moderate' wing of the Al Bu Said dynasty, represented by Qabus and Tariq.

June 1970 was an embodiment and an extension of the policies of the *Popular Revolutionary Movement*. Towards the beginning of 1969 this organization decided that the best way to drive imperialism from the Gulf was to hit at its weakest point, the Omani interior. The *Popular Revolutionary Movement* therefore created the *National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf* to lead armed struggle in Oman. The Front considered its struggle to be an extension of the armed struggle already being waged in Dhofar. On June 12th, 1970 the Front launched a set of raids and attacks against government military posts in the Green Mountain area; there were political links with the peasants and shepherds of the area and the basic tactic was to create a revolutionary foco on the mountain. This widescale military operation led to a series of arrests, many of which were the result of mistakes committed by militants of the Front itself. The most important of these was that many chose to remain in Matrah, a coastal city where it is very difficult to find refuge or to make a retreat.

A series of arrests were made on June 18th and many of the leaders of the Front were captured. Among them were Ahmad Humeidan, Sa'ud el-Salemi, Yahya el-Ghassani, Ahmad er-Rob'i and Seuliman Seif. Stocks of arms were captured and the British realized, by reading captured documents, that there was a large-scale political movement behind the military events of June 12th. This movement constituted a real revolutionary threat to reaction in the area, and there was barely a month between these arrests (on June 18th) and the overthrow of Said bin Taimur (on July 23rd). The speed of their reaction shows how important the events were in forcing the British to get rid of Sultan Said.

*What is the situation in other parts of the Gulf, in Bahrain and Trucial Oman? To what extent is there an opposition movement in those areas? Can you also explain the relationship between revolutionary guerrilla warfare in the mountains of Dhofar and Oman and revolutionary struggle in a very different*

*situation, the cities of the oil-producing Gulf states, where there is no countryside?*

SAID SEIF: The British and their local agents consider the interior of Oman to be the safe rear for defending the Trucial Oman area and the other oil-producing states. The revolutionary movement begins from the same premises. Britain's safe rear area can be turned against it. In addition Oman's geographic nature, its social composition and the politics of its people make it suitable to revolutionary work. In the rest of the Gulf, there are the beginnings of revolutionary action in the coastal towns. Bahrain suffers from an unfavourable situation: first, it is an island, and secondly, it is largely surrounded by Saudi Arabia and its military bases. At the present time, there is a noticeable shift in imperialism's policies in Bahrain itself. The revolutionary movement passed through two phases there: one, in the period 1953-56, was a reformist one, and the second one, which exploded in 1965, was a revolutionary one, calling for armed struggle. What imperialism is now trying to do is to implement the programme of the early reformist nationalist movement, by relying on the relatively large middle class and on the comprador bourgeoisie. This forms part of a general attempt to rally all possible forces against the revolutionary threat coming from Dhofar and the interior of Oman.

As far as the British withdrawal is concerned, we think that this withdrawal is a formal one; it marks the transition from old-style colonialism to neo-colonialism. This change is being carried out in several ways. The different states are being provided with the appearance of independence, such as having their own foreign representation, and having large administrations which can attract large numbers of middle-class intellectuals. At the same time the area is being more closely linked to the west, not only as an oil-producing area, but also as an area for other investment and the importation of consumer goods. In particular, there has been a large influx of financial capital into the area in recent months.

The British always divided the area into two zones: Oman, which it pretends is an independent Sultanate, and in which it claims that everything is the result of the wishes of its ruler, while the other zone is the rest of the occupied Gulf, under British protection, from which Britain is going to withdraw by the end of 1971. The function of this distinction is obvious, since it enables Britain to withdraw its bases from the rest of the Gulf and to consolidate its forces in Oman, and in particular to build up its position on the island of Masirah. After the withdrawal of the British from the rest of the Gulf, the Masirah base will become British imperialism's most vital base in the area, i.e. in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean.

As far as we are concerned, there is very little difference between the kind of treaties that Britain has had with the area officially under its protection, and the kind of treaties it has with the Sultanate of Oman.

*As a representative of the 'Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf', what is your opinion of the proposed Union of Arab Emirates? Do*

*you think that the disagreements within the UAE are of any importance, and what effect do you think the British withdrawal will have on the fight in Dhofar?*

TALAL SAAD: All Britain's plans in the Gulf are a response to the development of the revolutionary struggle in the area. As the revolution advances, plans to liquidate it are developed accordingly. The UAE is part of this attempt to liquidate the revolution. It is designed to be both a dam against the advance of the revolution, and to defend the oil interests of British and US imperialism after the formal withdrawal. There are differences within the UAE, but they are secondary compared to the dominant interests that unite all of them together.

The revolution in Dhofar is organically linked to the revolution in the whole of the Arab Gulf. The way to defeat imperialist manoeuvres is through long, difficult and protracted struggle to develop a people's war for liberation in the area as a whole, and to develop and escalate it militarily and politically in Oman in particular, so that Oman can become the revolutionary base from which the spark of revolution can spread to the Emirates and the Gulf coast. As for the withdrawal itself, it will make little difference to the position of British imperialism and of its local clients in the area.

*Interviewer: FH*

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## *Armed Insurrection and Dual Power*

The years 1928-35 are famous in Comintern history as the 'Third Period', the period of class against class, of 'social-fascism', and of the all-out struggle of Communist Parties in Europe and the USA to overthrow democratic and fascist bourgeois states in complete isolation from any other political forces—a struggle which proved disastrously unsuccessful everywhere. When the line shifted to that of the Popular Front at the Seventh World Congress, all the Parties of Europe seem to have murmured 'Never again'. Since 1935, the slogans and strategies within which the Communist movement has conducted the struggle against capitalism have been defensive: the Popular Front, the (Anti-Fascist Alliance, Advanced Democracy, the Struggle for Peace and Socialism, Peaceful Co-existence, etc. Whether the 'Peaceful Road to Socialism' was explicitly advocated or not, the logic of the policy always postponed any violent seizure of the bourgeois State to an indefinite future, the immediate struggle being an economic one between the socialist world and the capitalist world; the role of the masses in the capitalist countries was essentially that of

preventing those countries from cutting short this competition by war on the socialist states. Violence was externalized on to the under-developed and colonial countries; in the advanced countries it became an attribute of the bourgeoisie and its fascist allies. Any proletarian resort to violence could only be defensive. However disastrous the Third Period, and however necessary defensive positions were in the late 30's these policies have ultimately given rise, at best to an indefinite postponement of the proletarian seizure of power, at worst to a complete etiolation of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the erosion of all distinctions between Communism and Social-Democracy. Two generations of Communist militants have no knowledge or experience of an aggressive revolutionary class struggle, and the hegemony of the Communist movement over the rest of the revolutionary left has meant that non-Communists have not escaped the mark of this mentality.<sup>1</sup>

In the last ten years, however, this experience has been re-appraised, particularly by the young, in the light of the successes of violent revolutions in Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam, and of the failure (or only limited success) of the electoral strategies of the Communist Parties in most countries, and of other non-violent forms of struggle like CND in England and the civil rights movement in the USA. The classical lessons of Marxism-Leninism on the necessity for a violent struggle between the proletariat and its allies on the one hand and the imperialist bourgeoisie on the other have been re-learned by reading the works of Mao Tse-tung, Che Guevara, Régis Debray. For the Marxists in the student movement, in the Black liberation movements, the anti-War movement in the USA, etc., the necessity for a violent overthrow of the bourgeois State is now more or less axiomatic.<sup>2</sup> Protracted people's war, the guerrilla and the foco are the concepts which have catalysed this revitalization of the tradition of revolutionary Marxism after a thirty-year dormancy. In China, Vietnam and Cuba revolutionary forces carved out for themselves enclaves of popular power, defending them by military means. In China and Cuba these bases had a certain territorial integrity, in Vietnam popular and imperialist rule alternate with the presence and absence of the imperialist forces. These areas are then extended by protracted warfare until the oppressive State crumbles away, and the whole territory falls to the revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Communists have, of course, provided a central contingent in all defensive proletarian military struggles since 1935—in Spain, in the European Resistance, etc. But the defensive slogans under which these struggles were fought have enabled these heroic experiences to be appropriated ideologically in the interests of revisionism. The PCF's manipulation of the myth of the Italian Resistance is the classical example of this.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it still needs to be stressed that this 'violence' does not necessarily mean a long shooting war, nor is it based on the psychologistic argument that 'the ruling class won't give in without a fight'. In the last resort, all bourgeois rule, democratic or fascist, depends on the ruling classes' maintenance of a favourable balance of physical force, on their monopoly of the legitimate means of violence. Every proletarian revolution will involve a comparison of physical force between the two sides, even if the bourgeoisie, finding itself out-classed militarily in the crisis, should give in without a serious fight (as happened in Petrograd in October 1917). Such a shift in the balance of military power can only be achieved by democratizing the means of violence. Arms to the people is one of the essential demands of any proletarian revolution, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The problem, of course, is the relation of these revolutionary struggles and their strategic concepts to the revolution in the metropolitan imperialist countries themselves. Some militants have been content to wait for the armed socialist world to surround the weakening imperialist bastions as the revolutionary countryside surrounded the cities in China; they have therefore restricted their activity to solidarity struggles. Most, however, have attempted to apply the new concepts to the contradictions within the advanced capitalist countries themselves. The metropolitan rural sector is insignificant to the imperialist economy, and the territorial control exerted by the modern State's police is extremely efficient, so the rural enclave strategy is clearly inapplicable. A few student sects in Japan have attempted a literal application, with predictable results. Even in semi-developed countries like Brazil or Argentina, with their vast rural spaces, the State machine has proved too efficient, the police network too dense, for the successful establishment of red bases or guerrilla focos. Hence the tendency to adopt the strategy of urban guerrilla: in Brazil and Uruguay, and in national-minority enclaves in the metropolitan imperialist countries themselves: Quebec, Northern Ireland and the Basque country.

### People's War and Armed Propaganda

But this geographical shift from rural people's war to urban guerrilla is not just a tactical shift to cope with the different conditions in capitalist states; it also implies a fundamental change in the strategic concepts themselves, one sometimes, but not always, acknowledged by the advocates of urban guerrilla activities. This is the shift from people's war to armed propaganda. Even in the special case of Vietnam, where the popular forces have no stable bases in the country, the NLF does organize the whole people at night into a different social system: popular power is exercised by the masses, proletarian dictatorship is a fact. This is even more true in the cases of Cuba and China. But the urban guerrilla, even at its highest points—probably the Casbah in 1958 and Caracas in 1963—suffers from the problem of all terrorist organization: the imperatives of internal security dictate a structure incapable of organizing the masses, whose activity, even where they closely identify with the guerrilla, which is not always the case, is reduced to passive resistance.<sup>3</sup> Even a theorist as acutely aware of the distinction between armed propaganda and people's war as Pierre Vallières of the FLQ does not provide an analysis of the transition between the two.<sup>4</sup> Armed propaganda arouses and expresses the masses' hatred of their oppressors and can provide them with a sense of solidarity. But it does not furnish the organization essential if this ideological gain is to be translated into a political conquest of State power. And the social and psychological difficulties of clandestine

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<sup>3</sup> This, of course, is Marxism-Leninism's critique of terrorism, and it must not be confused with liberal or pacifist objections. Lenin did not waste a tear for the victims of Narodnik violence. He simply insisted that the organization of the masses was the precondition for a proletarian revolution.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Revolutionary Strategy and the Role of the Vanguard,' *L'Unité*, vol. I, no. 6, October/November 1969. Though unsigned, this document is largely based on a speech by Vallières.

terroristic organization<sup>5</sup> mean that such organizations are rarely able to establish themselves for any length of time against determined police activity, and their defeats can leave the masses in a worse condition than they found them in. Urban guerrilla warfare should not be sneered at, and its contribution to the revolution in the metropolitan and dependent imperialist countries may be very important, but by itself it cannot constitute the revolutionary vanguard that will lead the proletariat and its allies to power. Hence it is not a translation of the concepts of people's war to the advanced countries.

Of course, the Marxist-Leninist tradition in the West before 1935 did not envisage the revolution taking the form of a protracted guerrilla struggle. Marx, and especially Engels, were perfectly aware of the revolutionary potential of people's war,<sup>6</sup> but they did not intend or expect the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries to take that form. Rather they expected a political crisis provoked by internal contradictions of the régime or by the growing electoral strength of proletarian parties to provide the opportunity for a rapid and relatively bloodless insurrection. In this they were the inheritors of an insurrectionary tradition going back to Babeuf; they differed from the inter-preters of that tradition among their contemporaries like Blanqui in insisting on the active participation of the organized proletariat rather than confiding the initiative to a conspiratorial secret society. This tradition also governed Bolshevik thinking on the problem of revolution,<sup>7</sup> and Comintern practice until the Popular Front period. It is this tradition which has disappeared since 1935. The re-assertion of the classical Marxist-Leninist theses of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the necessity for armed revolution demands that the insurrectionary tradition be re-examined. Hence the importance of the English publication of A. Neuberger's *Armed Insurrection*.<sup>8</sup>

### Armed Insurrection

*Armed Insurrection* was first published in German in 1928 under a fictitious Swiss imprint, and translated into French in 1931. It is a manual in the art of insurrection for European Communist Parties. It consists of two theoretical chapters on the place of insurrection in the politics of the Third International and its illegitimate suppression from that of the (post-1914) Second International; accounts of the insurrections of Reval (1924), Hamburg (1923), Canton (1927), and Shanghai (October 1926, February 1927 and March 1927); chapters on the general strategic and tactical problems of insurrection, from the subversion of the armed forces of the ruling classes to 'how to build a barricade'; finally, a chapter on military work among the peasants. A new introduction by Erich Wollenberg, one of the original authors, explains how it came to be written.

<sup>5</sup> See Régis Debray: 'Latin America, the Long March', *NLA* 33, Sept.-Oct. 1963, pp. 47-8.

<sup>6</sup> See particularly Engels: 'Der Niederlage der Piemontesen', Marx-Engels: *Works* Bd. 6, pp. 387-8.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Lenin: 'Lessons of the Moscow Uprising', *Selected Works in Three Volumes* Vol. I, pp. 608-15; 'Marxism and Insurrection', Vol II, pp. 404-9.

<sup>8</sup> 'A. Neuberger' (i.e. Platnitsky, Tukhachevsky, Ho Chi Minh, Wollenberg and others) *Armed Insurrection*, *NLA* 1970, £3.00.



This bald description directly reveals a number of remarkable facts about the book. First, the concrete analyses deal with a series of insurrections which took place in the four years previous to its first publication, all of which were fairly serious failures. This is partly explained by the fact that the book was intended by the Agitprop section of the Comintern, who really produced it, to replace and bring up to date an earlier volume (Alfred Langer's *The Road to Victory*), but also, Wollenberg adds, because descriptions of failures, while as valuable scientifically as descriptions of successes, were less ideologically inflammatory, and hence the book was more likely to get past the censors.<sup>9</sup> The same considerations governed another decision: the pseudonymity of author and publisher. The Comintern could have produced the material in this book as internal documents for the relatively small number of cadres who were expected to read and study it. However, an apparently regularly published book, even if banned, was obviously less damning evidence against a militant in whose possession it was found than a file of cyclostyled Comintern documents. And the German name of the author and the 'Swiss' publisher meant that the USSR could not be accused of interference in another country's affairs. According to Wollenberg's preface, the authors in fact included Wollenberg himself (then head of the military bureau of the Marx-Engels Institute at Moscow), Piatnitsky (Comintern Organizing Secretary), Unschlicht (liaison between the Red Army General Staffs and the Comintern), Kippenberger (organizer of the Hamburg insurrection), Tukhachevsky (previously Chief of Staff of the Red Army) and Ho Chi Minh (then Vice-president of the Krestintern). The texts seem to have been written at various times between 1924 and 1928, and they were collated by Togliatti (then head of the Agitprop division of the Comintern). Togliatti (probably) also wrote an introduction on behalf of the Comintern criticizing certain of the theses advanced in the book (included in this edition as an appendix).

### The Reval Uprising

As each of the concrete descriptions is organized in the same way, a summary of one—the Reval Uprising (Chapter 3)—will show how the book works. An opening section deals with the political situation in Estonia in 1924—the economy and the currency had collapsed, producing mass unemployment, the ruling parties were racked by corruption and internal disputes, the Army itself was demoralized to the point

<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, the bourgeois press in this country has greeted its republication as a demonstration of the futility of insurrectionary politics. The book will indeed be of little use to someone who wants to bolster his waning faith in revolution: it does not encourage ideologically, it reveals the difficulties scientifically. Gramsci applied Romain Rolland's dictum 'Pessimism of the Intellect, optimism of the will' to Marxism: Neuberg's book represents only the first half of the prescription, as a deliberate act of policy. The cadres for whom the book was intended were expected to get their optimism of the will from elsewhere. Some Marxists, on the other hand, have suggested that certain of the authors of this book must have been motivated by a secret desire to discredit the Parties of the Comintern by revealing the details of their incompetence. But in fact Neuberg discreetly ignores some of the most disastrous adventures of these years—e.g. the March Action in Germany in 1921, the ofia Cathedral incident of 1923; whatever the shortcoming of the Parties' conduct in the examples discussed, they were all serious attempts at insurrection from which valuable lessons for the future could be drawn.

of ineffectiveness, and the Government's only response was the repression of workers and peasants, including a show trial of 149 Communists. Despite the repression, the working class was in an aggressive mood and ready for civil war, while many peasants, urban petty-bourgeois and soldiers sympathized with the proletarian cause. The next section discusses the military preparations for the insurrection. The Communist Party initiated these in the Spring of 1924, organizing three-man self-defence squads which coalesced into groups of ten and then into companies and battalions as the year went on. Four hundred men were in arms by December 1924, though their arms were poor and ammunition scarce. Loyal government troops in Reval itself were reckoned at only eight hundred men; many of the rest, it was hoped, could be persuaded to come over to the revolutionary side. Several years of thorough agitation in the Army had done its work, though the effects had been weakened by a recent turnover of troops. The Party decided to launch the insurrection by surprise on December 1st, without any mass agitation or general strike until the strong-points in the city had been seized by combat squads. The three battalions were assigned their tasks: 1) disarming the officer cadets, seizing the arms depot and the railway station; 2) disarming the police reserve, winning over the tank and airborne division stationed just outside the city, and the 10th Regiment; 3) capturing the administrative centres, the telegraph office, the parliament house, the Baltic station and releasing political prisoners. The next section is a detailed account of the course of the insurrection. For reasons of secrecy, the orders for insurrection were not given until one hour before it was to begin. But it proved impossible to assemble many more than half of the men in the combat squads in time, or to brief them adequately on their complex tasks. The result was that the first battalion failed except for the capture of the railway station, and its surviving members dispersed. The second battalion succeeded in taking the headquarters of the 10th Regiment, but could not bring the troops over to the insurrection, as the combat squad involved was completely unknown to them. The airborne division was quickly overcome and agreed to join the revolution, but instead of leaving immediately for the city centre, the combat squad waited at the airfield for orders until it was too late. They were then surrounded and captured by counter-revolutionary forces. The third battalion captured the parliament building but missed the prime minister through ignorance of its internal geography. The attacks on the War Ministry and the jail were failures.

The insurrection started at 4 a.m. By 11 a.m., counter-revolutionary troops had completely crushed the last pocket of resistance. Neuberg's last section is entitled Reasons for the Defeat. He outlines six 'organizational and tactical errors': 1) over-estimation of the demoralization of the garrison and of the strength of the Party's military organization; 2) the plan went far beyond the men available, a smaller number of targets should have been selected; 3) the squads were unable to respond to victory or defeat in their tasks; 4) the squads were not always able to handle their weapons; 5) reconnaissance was inadequate; 6) liaison was inadequate. But he argues that many of these errors, or all of them, are to be expected in an insurrection (the confusion and incompetence of the October insurrection are well known). The real mistake was elsewhere:

'What played the decisive role in the outcome of the insurrection was the fact that the small groups of revolutionary workers who were militarily organized remained isolated from the mass of the proletariat after they had launched the insurrection. . . The Real working class, as a mass, was a disinterested spectator during the fighting. This was the decisive factor.' This isolation was not the result of the backwardness of the masses, on the contrary, it was created by the Party's deliberate choice of tactics. 'The Party had exaggerated the importance of the military factor in insurrection and under-estimated that of the mass revolutionary movement' (p. 78). This error affected even the details of the insurrectionary tactics. To illustrate this I shall give a quotation which exemplifies the precision and concreteness of the discussion, and supports Wollenberg's contention that this study, like most of the others in this book, is based on eye-witness accounts: 'It was naïve to think that the men of the 10th Regiment, without communist soldiers, would actively join the insurgents at the behest of nine unknown workers. Imagine the scene: it is 5.15 a.m., still dark, the men are asleep. They are awoken by an unimpressively small group of men whom nobody knows; these men assure them that the insurrection has broken out, and invite the battalion to take the side of the insurgents. The soldiers cannot see this insurrection, the streets are empty, there are no workers. They know nothing of any preparations for an insurrection. What could one expect them to do? The men of the battalion, as should have been expected, remained neutral until they could get more information' (p. 74).

### Hamburg, Canton, Shanghai

In Hamburg in 1923, the errors were the reverse of this: the insurrection in Hamburg itself was relatively successful and had active mass support, but the Party did not try to extend it to the rest of Germany; after a few days it called off the Hamburg insurrection itself. 'If the leadership was to remain faithful to Marxism, it was not permissible for it, once the insurrection had broken out and had achieved a number of significant successes, to sound the retreat. This was all the more impermissible in that the insurrection had been launched on orders from the Party. "One does not play with insurrection"' (p. 102). Canton was different again: 'In Canton it was possible to seize power . . . thanks to the negligible size of the counter-revolutionary forces present. But this was only true for Canton. In Kwangtung province as a whole, the balance of forces was decisively unfavourable to the insurgents' (p. 126). The first two Shanghai insurrections were technical failures, but in the third, 'Marx's thesis that "insurrection is an art" was put into practice in the most exemplary fashion. This victory of the Shanghai proletariat was purchased at the cost of two previous defeats. The masses learn by experience. The experience of the previous conflicts had shown the necessity, long before the insurrection, of preparing carefully and systematically for the decisive battle; the necessity of ensuring that this battle will be directed solely by the party of the proletariat. In the third Shanghai insurrection, the Chinese Communist Party made excellent use of this experience' (p. 147). But after the successful insurrection, Chiang Kai-shek carried out a counter-revolutionary coup and destroyed the workers' government of Shanghai. 'Although it followed a basically

correct line with respect to the organization, preparation and execution of the uprising, the Chinese Communist Party (or rather its leadership) followed an incorrect line *vis-à-vis* the Kuomintang: it underestimated the revolutionary role of the proletariat, and continued to see the Kuomintang as an undifferentiated whole and the entire national bourgeoisie as a revolutionary force—whereas in fact a fraction of that bourgeoisie and hence of the Kuomintang (its right wing) has already openly entered the camp of counter-revolution and was willing to ally itself both with the indigenous forces of reaction and with foreign imperialism' (p. 148). The Communist Party 'continued to see the proletariat as an auxiliary force and not as the leader of the democratic revolution' (p. 149).

These last examples are of particular interest, because the 'error' they contain is by now a commonplace. The subsequent history of the Chinese revolution has revealed that, although the prescription about the CCP's attitude to the KMT was justified, the correct revolutionary strategy was not to rely more heavily on the proletariat as the revolutionary force, but to turn to the peasantry, and to change tactics from urban insurrection to rural, peasant-based people's war. Such a solution is suggested by Neuberg's discussion of the failure of the Canton insurrection, but was not taken up by the Comintern (the book's pessimism about the Chinese situation is criticized in the Comintern introduction, p. 284). This leads to a comforting reading of the book for the bourgeoisie: the history of the Chinese revolution proves that urban insurrection is futile, for success was only achieved in China by rural people's war. As the latter, too, is impossible in the advanced imperialist countries, revolution is impossible there. But Neuberg's 'error' is, in fact, both more and less serious than this. More serious because it is a conceptual, not an empirical error; at the same time less so, because as a universal error it indicates the absence of a concept which is not related simply to the different empirical contexts of China and the West, but helps to clarify the problem of insurrection and revolution all over the world.

All the conclusions I have quoted relate to a single problem: the relation between political and military struggle—between the class struggle and 'insurrection as an art'. In Reval, the problem was that of the temporal order—class struggle was deliberately damped down in the weeks preceding the insurrection in order to improve the chances of military surprise. The result was that the proletariat was as surprised as the ruling classes. In Hamburg, the problem was one of local and national integration. The Party, rather than organizing insurrections or even a general strike in solidarity with Hamburg, waited to see whether these would happen spontaneously. In China the problem was the relation between the national democratic struggle in alliance with the bourgeoisie in the KMT and the insurrection of the urban masses of Canton and Shanghai; and more widely, the problem of country and city, of the relationship to the peasant masses (which neither Neuberg nor the Comintern ignored). The same theme emerges again and again in the later chapters of the book. Neuberg points out that the people cannot initially have the military advantage over the counter-revolutionary forces, even after the most intensive agitation in the army and

military training of the Party. This advantage has to be won by bringing the masses into the struggle, arming them with weapons captured early in the fighting and thus isolating the ruling classes' remaining forces.

### Dual Power

Throughout Neuberger's book, these tasks are attributed to the Communist Party. The Party both prepares and organizes the masses for the insurrection and conducts the insurrection itself. But a Bolshevik Party can never claim to organize the oppressed masses as a whole. Precisely because it represents the interests of the proletariat as a whole in its struggle against capital, it cannot organize the whole of the proletariat, let alone the other oppressed classes, in a bourgeois or pre-bourgeois political system. The bourgeois State, whether fascist or democratic, is precisely designed to prevent the direct representation of the interests of the proletariat and the oppressed. There is no arena in bourgeois society where the representatives of the interests of the oppressed masses can be the representatives of the organized masses themselves. The Bolshevik Party can only claim to organize the *vanguard* of the proletariat. Hence the conduct of the insurrection has an anomalous location within a bourgeois or pre-bourgeois State. In so far as it is a technical problem (an 'art', in the famous phrase), it falls to the Party as the instance with the clearest perception of its necessity. But it cannot be *politically* initiated directly by the Party. The Party has to fight for the adoption of the tactic of insurrection by the masses of the people. This is what happened in Russia in October 1917. The insurrection was not conducted by the military bureau of the Bolshevik Party, but by the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. Of course, this body, originally established by Mensheviks before the Bolsheviks had a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, was staffed entirely by Bolsheviks by October, and the planning of the insurrection was carried out by Bolsheviks. But the insurrection itself was an act of the Petrograd Soviet—i.e. of the people of Petrograd. This reveals the concept absent from Neuberger's book: the existence of proletarian State institutions simultaneously with the bourgeois State which has to be overthrown—i.e. *dual power*.<sup>10</sup> State institutions in which the masses of the people are directly represented are a precondition for insurrection. In Russia in 1917, dual power took the form of soviets, and the insurrection was the relatively bloodless culmination of a period of Communist agitation in these soviets. In the shattered feudal State of China, on the contrary, dual power was only possible by the construction and defence of armed red bases in the countryside, so the process of insurrection was enormously extended, continuing through the period of dual power. But the same principle applies. It was dual power that Mao discovered in Hunan in 1927

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<sup>10</sup> It surfaces once, when he criticizes the German soviets in Hamburg—but only after the insurrection (see p. 103).

How does this omission of a concept affect the value of Neuberg's book? In so far as the problem is that of the political conditions for insurrection, a great deal. The basic political problem in the imperialist countries today is the form dual power can take. Even if this problem had been more than barely touched on in Neuberg's book, it would probably have to be re-thought today in the light of the changes in imperialism in the last four decades. But in so far as the problem of 'insurrection as an art' is concerned, the effect is much slighter. Reconnaissance, military training, agitation among troops, contingency planning and military tactics are all tasks which still fall to a revolutionary party, for the reasons given above. Neuberg's book is still invaluable in this respect, though of course, technical developments in street fighting and crowd control which have supervened since the 1920's must be taken into account in any attempt to use its prescriptions. But the consideration of such problems must not lead to any oneiric or adventurist technicism. To renew the insurrectionary tradition of the Comintern, we must start by criticizing it, and the fundamental criticisms must be directed not at the technical aspects, which were highly developed in that tradition, but at the political ones, which were never clearly articulated for the imperialist countries after Lenin's death. The value of Neuberg's book today is less that of a manual than that of a flawed theoretical work from whose criticism a new political theory of revolution in the imperialist metropolises can be developed.

## Sex Politics : Class Politics

In the course of the last year three books were written by women on women's oppression and liberation.<sup>1</sup> *The Female Eunuch* and *Patriarchal Attitudes*, although not written from within the women's liberation movement, are nevertheless valuable contributions to it. They try to grapple with a number of problems related to the current growth of consciousness among women and, in their treatment of the present as well as their suggestions for the future, reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the present stage. The author of *Sexual Politics* is an active member of the American women's liberation movement, and this book is the most recent attempt to articulate the components of sexual politics and put them into a social and historical context. In this sense it is a continuation of the project started by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949. The three books illustrate the range of problems as well as the scope of the effort necessary to construct a theory of women's position in society. They all suffer from one fundamental weakness: a failure to link sexual with class politics. But if one thing is clear about the women's liberation movement as it has developed in the last few years, it is its

organic relationship with the other forms which the class struggle has taken (above all in the United States): militant opposition to the imperialist war in Vietnam, the upsurge of revolutionary activity among the black population, radicalization of large sections of youth and students.

### Woman as Noble Savage

A female human infant gains admission to the society which 'has been lying in wait for her since before her birth and seizes her before her first cry, assigning to her her fixed destination'. Although this process gives her a certain room to manoeuvre, so to speak, enough room to make disastrous mistakes as well as achieve spectacular successes, it is nevertheless in almost every detail determined by the particular culture into which she is born.

Greer's premise is that a woman successfully socialized into patriarchal society is a spectacular failure as a human being, a tragic negation of all that she could be; she is, in short, defined by her castration.

From childhood, woman's upbringing, both physically and intellectually, is characterized by the contradiction between her feminine conditioning and the male order that suffuses the world around her. The castration of women is 'carried out in terms of a masculine-feminine polarity, in which men have commandeered all the energy and streamlined it into an aggressive conquistadorial power, reducing all heterosexual contact to a sado-masochistic pattern'. This results in love perverted by altruism and self-interest, and turned into an obsession produced by the bourgeois myth of love and marriage. This syncretism of body and soul is the stereotype, the myth of the Eternal Feminine. Perverted love comes to involve hate. The way out lies not in 'rebellion' but in 'revolution'. *The Female Eunuch* is therefore structured around three dichotomies: body/soul, love/hate and rebellion/revolution.

The section of the book dealing with sex shows Germaine Greer to be magnificently and militantly anti-puritan: here she is at her most convincing. She quotes from ballad literature to portray a time when women could describe their sex as that 'lusty wench' did in the 17th century:

You'll find the Purse so deep,  
You'll hardly come to the treasure.

Samuel Collins' *Systema Anatomicum* published in the same century 'described the vagina so lovingly that any woman who read his words must have been greatly cheered. . . . Collins' description is an active one: the vagina *speaks, throws, is tense* and vigorous'. The debunking of the illusory vaginal orgasm has been an advance, argues the author, but the pendulum has now swung to the other extreme and 'the substitution of the clitoral spasm for genuine gratification may turn out to

<sup>1</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, London 1970; Eva Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes*, London 1970; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, New York 1970 (to be published in Britain in 1971).



be a disaster for sexuality'. The spate of manuals on sexual technique is probably welcome, but they try to persuade one that 'there is a statistically ideal fuck which will always result in satisfaction if the right procedures are followed'. If female sexual response becomes localized in the clitoris, the same limitation will be imposed on it as that which has stunted male sexuality.

'The ideal marriage as measured by the electronic equipment in the Reproductive Biology Research Foundation laboratories is enfeebled—dull sex for dull people. The sexual personality is basically anti-authoritarian. If the system wishes to enforce complete suggestibility in its subjects, it will have to tame sex. Masters and Johnson supplied the blueprint for standard, low-agitation, cool-out monogamy.' Women 'must hold out not just for orgasm but for ecstasy'. Greer quotes from Blake's 'Jerusalem':

Embraces are cominglings from the Head to the Feet,  
And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place.

Germaine Greer's vision of the world, and woman's role in it, contains many almost Rousseauesque elements in that she believes that civilization has corrupted man and his return to nature will be a return to a stage of sexual innocence and love. Our civilization has been marked by disastrous consequences brought about by the polarization of the sexes; for in concentrating on the penis it has castrated women and deformed men. 'The world has lost its soul, and I my sex' quotes the author at the start of the book—the result is a world that will 'run to its lunatic extremes at ever-escalating speed'. Woman, like the Noble Savage, dear to the *philosophes* of the 18th century, has remained closer to nature because of her lack of education, and so it is woman who can, for this reason, in regaining her self-respect save the world. 'What is the arms race and the cold war but the condition of male competitiveness and aggression brought into the in-human sphere of computer-run institutions? If women are to cease producing cannon fodder for the final holocaust, they must rescue men from the perversities of their own polarization.'

For Rousseau, aggression was not an inherent characteristic of man, but one that civilization had imposed on him. The prime virtue of the natural man was pity, a feeling that resulted from his awareness of his own vulnerability, and which philosophy and reason were to distort as society developed. But this pity can still be found in creatures weaker than man—in women and animals. Greer is but an echo! 'If women would only offer a genuine alternative to the treadmill of violence, the world might breathe a little longer with less pain.' 'If women understand by emancipation the adoption of the masculine role then we are lost indeed. If women can supply no counterbalance to the blindness of male drive the aggressive society will run to its lunatic extremes at ever-escalating speed. Who will safeguard the despised animal faculties of compassion, empathy, innocence and sensuality?'

Here the basic, and determinant, contradiction of her work comes to the surface. There is an ambiguity already involved in the term 'female

eunuch' and now it obtains clarification. The ambiguity is that this concept is, in a certain sense, suspended between a negation: woman is a not-man—and a void—for what is a non-castrated woman? To show that woman is socialized to conform to an order not of her making, but made by man, or to number instances in which her socialization proceeds differently than man's, both of which the author does, inevitably defines woman in terms of man. (Indeed, unless women seize the male-dominated culture and turn it into an instrument of the liberation, thereby ensuring that the culture based on domination of one sex over the other will be destroyed together with its concomitant sexual polarization, women will continue to be defined in terms of men.) This ambiguity means that she must either reject the stereotype that parades itself as woman (thus also rejecting the sentiments tied to it) or embrace its qualities and, with them, confront those associated with men. In attempting to turn 'all the defects which it defines into advantages', Greer embraces the stereotyped woman and, in rejecting the world of today, turns her into a Noble Savage—an image of the past for the sake of the future.<sup>2</sup>

But the implications of this choice are not fully integrated in the book, and, as a result, we are continuously involved in a dilemma: women are castrated into something other than themselves but only by remaining so can they liberate themselves—and men too. Women are oppressed by men, but they should not confront them with violence—in the interest of the world of tomorrow. 'The way forward is unknown, just as the sex of the uncastrated female is unknown'—but women's liberation can only mean sexual liberation as 'sex is the principal confrontation in which new values can be worked out'. Women, in confronting men, 'perpetuate estrangement of the sexes and their own dependency'.

'Woman's oceanic feeling for the race has little opportunity for expression', Greer writes. 'It is grotesquely transmogrified in organized works of charity, where her genius for touching and soothing has dwindled into symbolic attitudinizing.' The female mind that 'flows on gossamers for deduction', that 'rejects the misguided masculine notion that men are rational animals', this female mind represents a breakthrough. Now that 'most information is not disseminated in argumentative form, but is assimilated in various non-verbal ways for visual and aural media, clarifications and virtues of disputation are more and more clearly seen to be simply alternative ways of knowing, and not the only or the principal ones', the female mind can come into its own.

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<sup>2</sup> 'A book on radical feminism that did not deal with love would be a political failure', writes Shulamith Firestone. 'For love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today. I realize this has frightening implications: Do we want to get rid of love? . . . Women and Love are [cultural] underpinnings. Examine them and you threaten the very structure of culture'. *Dialectics of Sex, The Case for Feminist Revolution*, William Morrow and Co. Inc., New York 1970. This remarkable book, dedicated to Simone de Beauvoir, will be published by Jonathan Cape in April 1971.

## 'Rebellion' and 'Revolution'

Given the terrible state of the world,<sup>3</sup> women could not do worse than choose violence. For this violence would be turned against men and 'it is not a sign of revolution when the oppressed adopt the manners of the oppressors and practise oppression on their own behalf'. 'That women should seek a revolution in their circumstances by training themselves as a fighting force is the most obvious case of confusing reaction or rebellion with revolution. . . . Women who adopt the attitudes of war in their search for liberation condemn themselves to acting out the last perversion of dehumanized manhood, which has only one foreseeable outcome, the specifically masculine end of suicide.'

Greer's recommendation for the future is a reverie of wishfulness. 'It would be a genuine revolution if women would stop loving victors in violent encounters. . . . If women were to withdraw from the spectatorship of wrestling matches, the industry would collapse; if soldiers were certainly faced with the withdrawal of all female favours, as Lysistrata observed so long ago, there would suddenly be less glamour in fighting. . . . The male perversion of violence is an essential condition of degradation of women. The penis . . . has become a gun . . . Women cannot be liberated from their impotence by the gift of a gun . . . The process to be followed is the opposite: women must humanize the penis, take the steel out of it and make it flesh again. . . . The question of the attitude to violence is inseparable from this problem.'

Starting from her view of the world as distorted and to be rejected, and given the fact that for her its principle contradiction is that between man and woman, Greer is forced to accept the female stereotype. Only by understanding her position can we understand why she castigates *all* attempts by women to organize merely as reaction and why her revolution insists ultimately on the passivity of women. The confrontation between women and men/the world is for her purely symbolic—unless it is dissolved in a sexual encounter.<sup>4</sup> She insists on the role of consciousness in the process of women's liberation: 'She should begin . . . by reassessing herself.' This is one of the strengths of the book. *The Female Eros* is an effective propaganda text, in the best sense of what she says about literature as communication: 'The love of fellows is based upon understanding and therefore upon communication. It was love that taught us to speak, and death that laid its fingers on our lips'. But the reassessment is seen as individual, is conducted in a void. Women can change the world for the better, she argues, and she is right—women's liberation is revolutionary precisely because it involves the liberation of all humanity—but in her view women could

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<sup>3</sup> Given the terrible state of the world plagued by the evils of violence, consumerism and pollution. In a recent interview on the radio (*Listener*, 21/1/71) Greer declared: 'If we are going to sort out this situation, this poor old polluted world, then women must step in with a special kind of wisdom which is not connected with achieving prestige and importance in a masculine way, but which is just as energetic in the exercise of something like tenderness and esteem and care for life.'

<sup>4</sup> 'If you are going to touch one, you might as well make love to him'. Interview with Greer, *Rolling Stone*, 7/1/1970.

do it almost by default: the world would crumble before their indifference.

Women's liberation will abolish the nuclear family, thus abolishing the necessary substructure of the authoritarian state, argues Greer, after which communism will necessarily follow. But instead of the nuclear family she would like to import peasant communities into industrial society, a return to the past. The vagueness of her concrete proposals for the abolition of the state is accompanied by the most detailed instructions for communal living: buy in bulk, buy second-hand clothes, make your own cosmetics. Her radicalism disintegrates into moralizing: in the whirl-wind of absurdities and half-truths that her revolution represents, it is often difficult to know if she wants to liberate women or improve the moral standards of the nation.<sup>5</sup>

So it is not surprising that Germaine Greer fails to identify herself with the women's liberation movement in so far as it is trying to organize masses of women and work out a theory of woman's position: suspended between the rejection of the present and a vision of the future she is reduced to impotence. Her criticism of the current women's lib contains much truth, but it is not criticism offered sympathetically: in zig-zagging between left and right it dismisses the entire political experience of women's lib today without replacing it with anything but reveries.

*The Female Eunuch* has much in common with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*: both focus on the plight of women at home, on popular culture as the source of propaganda for the status quo, and on biased 'scientific evidence' evoked in its defence. And yet, Betty Friedan's *Now* is a vehicle of reformism, working for amelioration within the system. Germaine Greer is at least more radical in tone: 'The conservatives who saw women's liberation as the undermining of our civilization and the end of the state and marriage were right after all; it is time for the demolition to begin.'

### 'Emile' versus the 'Social Contract'

The political demand for women's rights was born during the struggle for power between the French bourgeoisie and nobility in the course of-

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<sup>5</sup> One of her proposals is that middle-class women could achieve a revolution 'in consciousness' by marrying working-class men. As women intellectuals are being turned by their education into 'arrogant, aggressive, compulsive and intense' beings, they lose touch with 'more innocent recreations'. Married to their truck-drivers they would 'need to shed their desperate need to *seduce* a man, and accept the gentler role of loving him. . . . The alternative to conventional education is not stupidity, and many a clever girl needs the corrective of a humbler soul's genuine wisdom'. The added advantage of such an arrangement would be that 'a learned woman cannot castrate a truck driver like she can her intellectual rival, because he has no respect for her bookish capabilities'. This class snobbery and belief in salvation through 'more innocent recreations' reminds one very much of D. H. Lawrence. A devastating treatment of D. H. Lawrence's views is given by Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, pp. 257-93.

the French Revolution. But the Revolution, even in its most radical moment, failed to include rights for women in its political programme. Eva Figes in her *Patriarchal Attitudes* calls this a betrayal, an effect of Rousseau's misogynist ideology. Unlike Greer, who offers only a superficial account of the rise of capitalism, mainly to illustrate her view that it pulled the family out of production with detrimental effect on all concerned, Figes puts forward more ambitious theses which require an answer.

According to her 'woman shared in the prosperous heyday [of England's renaissance] and no doubt her social position was aided by the fact that England was ruled by a strong queen, unaided by a male escort'. The Reformation put the accent on marriage as a lifelong partnership and friendship, she goes on with approval.<sup>6</sup> The household was a working and productive unit and a wife's labour was necessary to her husband. The craftsman's wife helped her husband and supervised the domestic chores, and was often engaged in a business of her own. With the later development of capitalism, the rich man's wife became an idle plaything while women lower down the social scale provided cheap labour. The increasing difference between men and women was reflected in their education. 'Compare Shakespeare's heroines to the ladies of the Restoration and you see the change that has taken place in under a century.'<sup>7</sup> Women became increasingly dependent on men economically, a process that went together with a growing division between the sphere of work and that of home. Religious taboos were thereby weakened and 'sexual licence' increased. Some means of ensuring authentic paternity for the purposes of inheritance became essential. This was the root cause of the 'romantic revolution'—and its instigator was Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Rousseau's role is contrasted with that of other men of literary fame in the 18th century who were 'in favour of women getting a broader education. Dr Johnson approved of educated women and said that men who did not were frightened of being outstripped by their womenfolk: Richardson, Daniel Defoe and Addison pleaded for a more comprehensive education for women. . . . The famous salons of Paris in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries found a more modest counterpart in London.' However, a reaction came which 'attacked both the social inequality on which this life was based, and the values implicit in this urban way of life, and the prime instigator was Jean Jacques Rousseau. At the same time . . . he put women firmly back in the home.'

"The whole gamut of reactions and attitudes which we now cover under the umbrella "Romantic Revolution" is directly attributable to

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<sup>6</sup> Compare Greer's opinion: 'Protestant moralists sought to redeem marriage from the status of a remedy against fornication by underplaying the sexual component and addressing the husband as wife's friend.' *The Female Eunuch*, p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> According to Greer, and more correctly 'one of the most significant apologists of marriage as a way of life and a road to salvation was Shakespeare. . . . The new ideology of marriage needed its mythology and Shakespeare supplied it'. *The Female Eunuch*, pp. 207-9.

Rousseau,' states the author. "A man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains", thunders the inspiring if philosophically unsound first line of the *Social Contract*, and if one had not read any of his other works one might remain under the blissful illusion that when he uses the word "man" he means "mankind". In emphasizing woman's role as mother, Rousseau celebrated moral virtue as well as confinement to the bounds of home. 'See that mothers deign to nourish their own babies', Eva Figs quotes from *Emile*, 'and morals will be reformed of themselves, and the sentiment of nature will be awakened in all hearts. . . . The appeal of the domestic life is the best counterpart to bad morals . . . When the family is lively and animated, the domestic chores are the dearest occupation of the wife and the most delightful entertainment to the husband.'

Figs' rejection of this image is not entirely unsympathetic to it: 'Note that domestic life is still somehow "entertainment" for men, a pleasurable diversion and not a central preoccupation. The image that Rousseau fosters would not have been a bad one, had it not been based on fundamental inequality, and this is particularly ironic when one considers that Rousseau also preached a radical egalitarianism.' Rousseau proclaims: 'To renounce one's liberty is to renounce one's quality as a man, the rights and also duties of humanity.' But, Figs argues, liberty, perhaps humanity itself, is an all-male affair, for *Emile* has the following to say about women: 'They must be trained to bear the yoke from the first, so that they may not feel it, to master their own caprices and to submit themselves to the will of the others.'

Given that the *Social Contract* was 'the Bible of the French Revolution, illogical as the book now seems to us' and that Robespierre was Rousseau's most devout disciple, it comes as no surprise to the reader of Figs to learn that 'the women of revolutionary France were thoroughly conned'. For, although women played a significant role in the French Revolution at all social levels, 'once the ground-work was done the position of women changed: in 1793 the National Convention suppressed all women's political clubs and societies, closed the salons, and denied women all political rights. This was in fact not only a betrayal but represented a position even worse than before the Revolution, since during the *ancien régime* women with certain property qualifications had been able to vote and occasionally even sit in provincial assemblies. Later Napoleon decreed that a woman should obey her husband, that the father had sole authority over her children, and that a woman could not go to law without her husband's consent'.<sup>8</sup> The thesis is unambiguous: the French Revolution betrayed women, owing to Rousseau's influence and his unsound and illogical philosophy.

The betrayal of women by the Jacobins is contrasted by Figs with the progress made by them up to the eighteenth century and in contemporary England. However, her historical presentation in fact shows

<sup>8</sup> But if the point of the Code Napoléon was to ensure the correct father for inheritance purposes, as she suggests, then it sadly failed, for Article 312 decreed: 'L'enfant conçu pendant le mariage a pour père le mari'. Previously based on moral conviction, paternity of children was now assured by law.

women at first engaged in productive work centred around the home but later—with the development of capitalism that 'breaks up the idyll' of the family as a productive unit and of husband-wife partnership—divorced from productive work. Moreover she is of course unable to point to any actual political rights of women or indeed of most men in England at the time when French women were arresting their king. In fact without giving credit where it is due Figeis is criticizing Rousseau and the Jacobins, from the standpoint of the *Social Contract*. She is pitting the *Social Contract* against *Emile*.

Because of her basic premise (history seen in terms of man-woman conflict) and her method (history is reduced to a few texts extrapolated from both their literary context and that of their time—a method which allows her to slide from one author to another, from one century to another, from one class to another) she does not grasp the issues at stake, the economic and political forces of living history. However she brings to the surface (and that is half the work done) a crucial problem why bourgeois radicalism as advanced as that of the Jacobins failed to take up the question of women's rights at the time when it advocated rights for men? Indeed, this contradiction is found explicitly in Rousseau's opus. How do we reconcile *Emile* with the *Social Contract*?

### Rousseau and the French Revolution

The *Social Contract* was written as an answer to Thomas Hobbes.<sup>9</sup> Hobbes argued that men had to choose between being free, but not civilized, or living in civil society, under authority. Rousseau argued that, on the contrary, men can be both free and live in civil society. Indeed, only through living in society can man experience his fullest freedom and realize his own nature as man. True, society has corrupted men but it is a bad one and should be changed. The solution to Hobbes' problem is a simple one: a people can be free if it retains sovereignty over itself. Hobbes argued that sovereignty, based on nature or divine right, is transferred from the people to the ruler by a social contract; on the contrary, argued Rousseau no such transfer need take place. Sovereignty not only originates with the people, it ought also to stay there.

This was the revolutionary scope of Rousseau's ideas. They helped to inspire a revolution of unprecedented radicalism: the Jacobin Republic attempted to carry the ideas of equality and people's sovereignty into practice—thereby putting the relationship between freedom, equality and property into sharp focus.

Events between 1789 and 1794 showed a series of shifts in power from the right to the left, reflected in the political manifestos of the period. The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen insisted on the right to own property as natural and inviolable. It expressed belief in a constitutional and secular state, with civil liberties and guarantees for

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<sup>9</sup> Both *Emile* and the *Social Contract* were published in the same year, 1762, and promptly burned by the Geneva government who immediately issued a warrant for the author's arrest.

private enterprise, a government of taxpayers and property owners that excluded half of the adult male population. The following protest by women was put to the assembly of the Estates General in that year: 'Nous ferons mouvoir l'Eglise, nous animerons la Noblesse, nous dériderons la magistrature, nous affranchirons le Tiers-Etat; et quand il s'agira des intérêts des trois corps réunis, on refusera de nous appeler. Assez longtemps, les femmes l'ont souffert: la fin de leur esclavage est arrivée et il ne sera plus dit que, des vingt-quatre millions d'individus qui peuplent la France, la moitié n'aura pas le droit d'être représentée aux Etats généraux!'<sup>10</sup> The Jacobin Republic of 1793 went further: it proclaimed universal male suffrage, the right to work, the right to education, the right to insurrection, abolition of slavery in the French colonies. These ideas, as well as the mass participation in politics characteristic of the Revolution, frightened the European ruling class into military intervention. They were also the inspiration of working-class radicalism in the early 19th century, and of the precursors of the suffragette movement.<sup>11</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, who in 1790 defended the French Revolution against Burke, was two years later to produce *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in which she argued against Rousseau's views on women and demanded for them the education he had envisaged for Emile.

However, the suffrage proclaimed by the Jacobins in 1793 did not include women. A demand for women's rights was indeed posed in 1791 by Olympe de Gouges, who put forward a manifesto *Droits de la Femme* in 17 articles with an argument that was unanswerable: 'If women have the right to mount the scaffold, they have the right to mount the tribune.'<sup>12</sup> Her struggle in favour of women's rights as well as against the violence of the Convention led her to the guillotine in November 1793. The Jacobin Terror struck right and left, men and women. A few days later, Mme Roland, an active supporter of the Gironde, perished in the same way. The Convention now proceeded to prohibit all women's associations and, as women protested against this injustice, denied them access to the Convention and all public assemblies—thus effectively depriving them of *de facto* as well as *de jure* political rights.

Let us now—against this background—examine Rousseau's ideas more closely. He ends his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men* with a statement that 'there is hardly any inequality in the state of nature

<sup>10</sup> Quoted by *Le Monde*, February 7th, 1971 from the archives of Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand which is one of the most complete centres of documents in Europe. It is extremely difficult to obtain a coherent idea of the role of women in the French revolution from secondary sources—this history still remains to be written.

<sup>11</sup> 'Although it is beyond question that the culture of eighteenth-century France had much to do with the suggestion that democracy apply in sexual as well as class politics . . . and as even the reforming influence of the French Revolution was throttled in England until the danger of revolution had passed, and consequently did not emerge in any fullness until the 1830's, it seems appropriate to begin this chapter's discussion [of sexual revolution] in the nineteenth century'. Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by August Bebel in *La Femme et le Socialisme*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1964.



[inequality of individual men], all the inequality that now prevails owes its strength and growth to the advance of the human mind, and become at last permanent and legitimate by the establishment of property and laws'. Therefore almost all inequality is due to 'property and laws'. In contrast to this, he writes in *Emile*: 'Others [among women] not content to secure their rights lead them to usurp ours: for to make women our superior in all the qualities proper to her sex and to make her equal in all the rest, what is this but to transfer to the woman the superiority that nature has given to her husband?'<sup>13</sup> Nature? But 'nature' stands here for bourgeois reason, as can be seen from the following passage: 'Women do wrong to complain of the inequality of man-made laws: this inequality is not of man's making, or, at any rate, it is not a result of mere prejudice, but of reason. She, to whom nature has entrusted the care of children, must hold herself responsible for them to their father. . . . when she gives her husband children who are not his own she is false to him and to them, her crime is not infidelity but treason. To my mind, it is the source of dissension and crime of every kind'.<sup>14</sup> Here the limits of bourgeois right can be clearly seen. If children are man's property and woman is contracted into his service (Rousseau saw marriage as a 'civil contract'), then upsetting property relations becomes crime and treason. Equality is in fact dependent on one's position in the particular social hierarchy based on property. As Rousseau was to explain in his *Social Contract*: '... as for equality, this word must not be taken to imply that degrees of power and wealth should be absolutely the same for all, but rather that power shall stop short of violence and never be exercised except by virtue of authority and law, and, where wealth is concerned, that no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself; this in turn implies that the more exalted persons need moderation in goods and influence and the humbler persons moderation in avarice and covetousness.' (And in a footnote: 'Do you want coherence in the state? Then bring the two extremes as close together as possible; have neither very rich men nor beggars, for these two estates, naturally inseparable, are equally fatal to the common good; from the one class come friends of tyranny, from the other, tyrants. It is always these two classes which make commerce of the public freedom: the one buys, the other sells'.)<sup>15</sup>

The economic structure that underlies Rousseau's political philosophy can be seen to be petty commodity production and exchange, in which the economic unit is not the free individual, free to sell his labour, but the *family*, in which the man is the patriarchal master and of which the *Communist Manifesto* writes: 'Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the indus-

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Eva Figes, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted by Eva Figes, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> These are truly prophetic words, a hint of time to come. Rousseau was himself aware of this, for he goes on to say: 'Such equality, we are told, is a chimera of theory and could not exist in reality. But if abuse is inevitable, ought we not at least to control it? Precisely because the force of circumstances tends always to destroy equality, the force of legislation ought always to tend to preserve it'. *The Social Contract*, Penguin 1968, pp. 96-7.

trial capitalist'.<sup>16</sup> The most radical layer of the Jacobin Republic, the Sansculottes, was an amorphous conglomeration of small craftsmen, shopkeepers, artisans, petty entrepreneurs—in short, a combination of 'small master' elements. They combined a respect for (small) property with hostility for the rich; they dreamed of a world of small farmers and artisans undisturbed by bankers—or industrialists. One might conclude that at the time of the French Revolution the *political and economic* forces were not ripe for the legal emancipation of women.<sup>17</sup>

The completion of the bourgeois programme—to make all equal before the law, ultimately symbolized by the right to vote irrespective of the size of one's property—took (for both men and women) a long and tortuous path over the next 130 years. While the 18th century gave birth to a political demand for legal equality of women, the 19th century provided the economic base. The industrial revolution introduced a large section of women into public production and turned them into proletarians; in general, it provided women with the opportunity to work outside the family. The 19th century saw the emergence of a militant suffrage movement among women—though in the end it was not their militancy that earned them the vote, but rather their service in the First World War. The 19th century also saw the correct posing, at the theoretical level, of the problem of women's historical subjugation, in the works of Marx and Engels. Moreover, Marxist theory posed the whole question of equality in a new light. 'The equality of the bourgeoisie (abolition of class [or sex] privileges)', writes Engels in *Anti-Dühring*, 'is very different from that of the proletariat (abolition of *classes themselves*)'.

Figes goes on to discuss the patriarchal ideology that identifies women with nature and men with reason, the ways in which women are brought up to feel themselves inferior, as well as their situation today. Other bourgeois thinkers: Hegel, Darwin, Freud—theoreticians who represent the classical revolutionary bourgeois tradition—are seen as ideologues of oppression. The point is that her historical conception does not provide any means for their proper evaluation, and their role in uprooting the system that produced them is therefore entirely lost.

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<sup>16</sup> The above is offered only as a guide to Rousseau's positions. For a wider discussion, the reader is in particular directed to Althusser's 'Sur le "Contrat Social"' in *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, No. 8. There is one point of 'disagreement' relevant to my analysis. Althusser writes: 'Rousseau invoque comme solution pratique à son problème (supprimer l'existence des classes sociales) une *régression économique* vers un des phénomènes de la dissolution du mode de production féodal: le petit producteur indépendant, l'artisanat urbain ou rural, ce que le second *Discours* décrit sous le concept de "commerce indépendant" (indépendance économique universelle permettant un "libre" commerce, c'est-à-dire de libres relations entre les individus)'. The point I want to make is that 'le petit producteur indépendant' is not an individual but the family represented in the political and civil society by the male head (*paterfamilias*). None of the recent Marxist critics of Rousseau (Althusser, Della Volpe, Colletti) attempts to integrate Rousseau's position of women into his political philosophy.

<sup>17</sup> Later Proudhon and his followers in the First International will argue against legal emancipation of women on the grounds that it would lead to the dissolution of the family—which they saw as the fundamental unit of society and wanted to preserve.

This incapacity to grasp 'the march of modern history' means that in the end she can only offer a series of reforms designed to take account of the cash nature of marriage, and dissolve it.

"The harsh fact of the matter is that the institution of marriage we are now trying to reform so unsuccessfully is based not on love, sentiment or compatibility, but on economic necessity. . . . The idea of people being tied together not by love, but by economic necessity, is abhorrent to us. It smacks of prostitution."<sup>18</sup> Why should you 'tie yourself to a woman when you can have her anyhow, why pay through the nose for what you can have for free?' In her view the state ought to become the financial mediator between parents and children: 'A man who paid tax to the state (then repaid to the mother in the form of a child allowance, unless the father or some other person had the care of the child) would at the same time have his paternal rights officially recognized'. But she does not seem to have much hope; 'perhaps it is asking too much . . . and we must wait for its meaning [that of marriage] to be gradually eroded over the next 50 years'.<sup>19</sup>

### Sexual Politics and Class Politics

By the end of the 18th century the British mercantile bourgeoisie was in control of most of the world's markets and raw material. The industrial revolution, provoked by this concentration of capital and resources, took off in the last decades of that century and accelerated over the next years until, by 1830, it produced a new class in history: a large and radical proletariat. The basis of the industrial revolution in its first stage was cotton. By 1834 two-thirds of British textile workers were women.

The industrial bourgeoisie was now strong enough, by forming a bloc with its mercantile counterpart, to secure independent political rights with the Reform Bill of 1832. The world by then seemed a different place. Free Trade and competition were replacing old feudal, religious and patriarchal ties. This presupposed individuals who could freely dispose of their activity. To create such 'free' and 'equal' persons was one of the tasks of capitalist production. In this new conception of social relations, marriage became a business contract. If freedom was required to conduct business, was it not also required to contract marriage?

This is the attitude behind John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*. His argument for women's suffrage was that women should be able to dispose of themselves and their talents under the auspices of free competition. What is characteristic of this new world, argues Mill, is that

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<sup>18</sup> "The bourgeoisie has, historically, played a most revolutionary part. . . . [It] has torn away from the family its sentimental veil and has reduced family relations to a mere money relation". *Communist Manifesto*.

<sup>19</sup> Both Figs and Greer have lost their faith in this civilization—but not Shulamith Firestone: "Thus in terms of modern technology, a revolutionary ecological movement would have the same aim as the feminist movement: control of the new technology for human purposes, the establishment of a beneficial "human equilibrium" between man and the new artificial environment he is creating, to replace the destroyed "natural balance". op. cit., p. 220.

human beings are no longer born into their place in life. Women are the only exception to this general rule. 'The disabilities, therefore, to which women are subject for the mere fact of their birth, are solitary examples of this kind in modern legislation.' If women have a greater natural inclination for one thing rather than another, there should be no law or social persuasion to tell them which: 'what they can do, but not so well as men who are their competitors, competition suffices to exclude them from'. Whatever 'women's services are most wanted for, the free play of competition will hold out the strongest inducements to them to undertake'.<sup>20</sup>

Mill was thus arguing for the right of women to compete with men—but they were already doing so in thousands, in industry, on the land, and in domestic service. Mill's project related to something different: the bourgeois woman could not dispose of her property, gain higher education, engage in business or control various aspects of her marriage, without gaining legal rights. In 1866 Mill presented a petition to Parliament demanding suffrage for women of the class whose men already held the vote—and thus inaugurated the first phase of what Kate Millett calls the Sexual Revolution.<sup>21</sup>

In *Sexual Politics* Kate Millett argues that between 1830 and 1930 the world saw the coming and the passing of the first phase of the Sexual Revolution. The precursor of that revolution was Mill, in particular his work *On the Subjection of Women*. (The oscillations in the dating here are Kate Millett's own.) In her view, Mill not only gave an extremely lucid and realistic account of the position of women (enslavement of their body and mind, differential education, marriage based on sale or enforcement), he also argued that the subjugation of women is the psychological foundation of other forms of oppression. No love can be founded on a family in which man and woman are not equal. He therefore urged complete emancipation of women not only for the sake of an 'unspeakable gain in happiness to the liberated half of the species, the difference to them between a life of subjection to the will of the others and a life of rational freedom', but also for the enormous benefit to humanity in having its talents doubled. The time has come, Mill said in 1869, for 'the most fundamental of the social relations' to be 'placed under the rule of equal justice'.

### Engels versus Mill

But, Millett argues, Mill was 'a liberal [who] saw no further back in time than a universal rule of force and who took the subjugation of women to be an eternal feature of human life which "progress" and moral persuasion might alleviate, as he felt they had tyranny and

<sup>20</sup> Mill argued that the English were particularly called upon to recognize women's rights as they were 'farther from a state of nature than any other modern people' and 'more than any other people, a product of civilization and discipline'.

<sup>21</sup> 'Under whatever conditions, and within whatever limits, men are admitted to the suffrage, there is not a shadow of justification for not admitting women under the same. The majority of women of any class are not likely to differ in political opinion from the majority of men in the same class . . .' *The Subjection of Women*, Everyman, p. 268.

slavery'. Mill did urge women's right to work, enter professions, etc., but he imagined most of them would stay at home. He also thought that legal rights would be sufficient. In contrast to him, Millett points out, Engels was much more radical and revolutionary. First of all, he 'preferred instead to regard institutions as man-made and hence capable of radical, sudden, even violent alteration, should a conscious revolutionary humanity so desire. Having seen the connection between the patriarchal family and private property, Engels believed he had found the origins of property in the subjugation and ownership of women upon which patriarchy was founded'.

'What Mill had thought to be a primordial evil, the inevitable consequence of man's original slavery, Engels' historical account transformed into an oppressive innovation, an innovation which brought with it innumerable other forms of oppression, each dependent upon it. Far from being the last injustice, sexual dominance became the keystone to the total structure of human injustice'. This means that the end of male economic domination, the entrance of women into the economic world on a perfectly equal basis, would do away with the need for sexual love to be based on financial coercion, dissolve the patriarchal family, and bring women independence, that is, would bring about social revolution.

While Millett is right to draw a dividing line between Engels and Mill, and indeed uses the former for a lucid critique of the latter, she nevertheless draws that line not at the origin of the difference between them but at its secondary aspect. For Millett's persuasive account of Engels' position contains one important and fundamental misunderstanding which underpins the whole book, its structure as well as its theory. Whereas Engels really argued that the development of productive forces gave rise to private property, resulting in the subjugation of women as well as the subjugation of most men, Millett's Engels argues that it is the subjugation of women that gave rise to private property (ownership of women being its first form) and thereafter to 'the total structure of human injustice'.<sup>22</sup> According to her, both Mill and Engels saw the subjugation of women as the cause of other forms of oppression, and therefore she can argue that once this oppression disappears all other forms will do so as well. The class history of mankind is thereby turned into the sex theory of history. Two concepts, so crucial to Engels' theory, 'private property' and 'class' (in particular, the proletariat, which Millett replaces by 'conscious revolutionary humanity'), play no role in her analysis, (Nor in that of Mill, needless to say.)<sup>23</sup>

In fact, Engels was adamant on this point. 'That woman was the slave

<sup>22</sup> This position has some structural similarities with the old Greek and Hebrew myths (of which Eva Fíges gives an enjoyable account). Just as Pandora (an active female) by opening her box lets loose all evil onto the world, Kate Millett's female (a passive one) does the same by allowing herself to be subjugated. Why did she? Engels, for instance, argued that women accepted exclusive sexual possession as a not unwelcome 'penalty' for 'becoming exempt from the ancient community of men'. Millett justifiably points out that Engels, like his age, was ignorant of the nature of female sexuality.

<sup>23</sup> Marx had an accurate description of Mill when he said: 'On the plain, simple mounds look like hills; and the imbecile flatness of the present bourgeoisie is to be measured by the altitude of its greatest intellects'. *Capital*, I, p. 518.

of man at the commencement of society is one of the most absurd notions that have come down to us from the period of the Enlightenment of the 18th century'. History in fact proceeded quite differently. 'According to the division of labour then prevailing [in early history] in the family, the procuring of food and the implements necessary thereto fell to the man; he took them with him in case of separation just as women retained the household goods.' This division of labour does not at this stage imply any dominance of one sex over the other. However 'the domestication of animals and breeding of herds had developed a hitherto unsuspected source of wealth and created entirely new social relationships'. It separated the family from the *gens* as well as changed the family itself. According to the above division of labour 'the man was also the owner of the new sources of foodstuffs'.

'In an old unpublished manuscript', continues Engels further on, 'the work of Marx and myself in 1845 [*The German Ideology*], I find the following: "The first division of labour is that between man and woman for child breeding". And today I can add: The first class antagonism which appeared in history *coincides with* the development of the antagonism between man and woman in a monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression [coincides] with that of the female sex by the male. Monogamy was a great historical advance, but *at the same time* it inaugurated, *along with slavery and private property*, that epoch lasting until today, in which every advance is likewise a relative regression, and in which the well-being and development of the one group are attained by the misery and repression of the other.'<sup>24</sup>

The subjugation of women by men came as a result of the development of surplus wealth due to the development of production: at the same time other forms of class oppression (slavery) came into being. The antagonism between men and women, as expressed by sexual politics, is therefore historically determined by the appearance of private property. Two related conditions for the liberation of women follow, according to Engels: 1. reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry (*public* production as against the *private* nature of housework); 2. abolition of the family as the economic unit so that *all* its functions become public (in contrast to *private* responsibility of *women*). But this does not sum up women's liberation—any more than the abolition of private property sums up communism. It is its *precondition*, its premise as Engels said.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The italics are mine. The German original for 'to coincide with' is *zusammenfallen mit*. Although it suggests coincidence in time from the context of the paragraph female subjugation and slavery were more closely interlinked. Engels here quotes Marx: "The modern family contains in embryo not only slavery (*servitus*) but serfdom also, since from the very beginning it is connected with agricultural services. It contains within itself *in miniature* all the antagonisms which later develop on a wide scale within society and its state".

<sup>25</sup> The historical existence of matriarchy has hardly a supporter in modern anthropology. However, the outcome of this debate does not ultimately determine the validity of Engels' argument. His contribution consists in seeing the family as a socio-economic formation, which therefore changes historically, and in connecting the oppression of women with the existence of private property rather than with their biological specificity. These theses represent in fact the classical Marxist position on the family and women. His text, however, falls short of a rigorous analysis of the family as the basic unit of civil society.

Thus the foundation of Millett's position is as follows. Society today is based ultimately on the subjugation of women. It was caused by history—not nature: it can therefore be changed if humanity so desires. With the disappearance of female subjugation all other forms of oppression will crumble. This will happen when women are economically independent, and legally and socially equal to men. In this process the patriarchal family will disappear. Sexual love, based on voluntary association of men and women, will be independent of coercion. The path to this goal is called Sexual Revolution. There are two concepts that are not part of this tableau: property and class.

'The term "politics"', Millett writes, 'shall refer to power structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another'. Given the fact that men dominate women, 'sex is a status category with political implications'. Recent developments in the States have convinced us that the relationship between races is a political one—the same can be shown for the relationship between sexes. Sexual politics has achieved a most ingenious form of 'interior colonization', sturdier than any other form of segregation; every avenue of power is in the hands of men. It obtains consent, based on the needs and values of the dominant sex, and is elaborated in terms of the conduct, gesture and attitude of each sex. The patriarchal family is therefore *the* agent of the patriarchal society. In the past, the patriarchal system used to grant the man nearly total ownership of women (and children); modern patriarchy has modified this through a series of legal reforms granting divorce, protection, citizenship and property to women.<sup>26</sup> In class terms some women do appear to have a higher social status than some men, but in the last instance 'the caste of virility triumphs over the social status of wealthy and educated women'. In fact 'one of the chief effects of class within patriarchy is to set one woman against another'. Women have less investment in the class system, although, because of their economic dependence, 'middle-class women identify their economic survival with the prosperity of those who feed them'. Indeed, 'one of the most efficient branches of the patriarchal government lies in the agency of its economic hold over its female subjects'. Most women are engaged in work which is not paid—when they work outside the home they enjoy only half of the average income of men. When patriarchy is exposed and questioned, the system begins to change.

### The Suffragette movement and its heritage

This first happened, the author goes on, around the 1830's, when political organizations on issues of sexual politics appeared and excited public controversy. The movement for sexual revolution that developed in England and the United States during the next hundred years in the end did not succeed in abolishing patriarchy. 'The chief weakness of the movement's concentration on suffrage, the factor which helped it to

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<sup>26</sup> The 1964 American Civil Rights Act, which forbids discrimination in employment on the basis of sex is 'the first and only federal legislative guarantee granted to women since the vote'. As Kate Millett points out, it is not enforced, has not been enforced since its passage, and was not enacted to be enforced. The inclusion of 'sex' in the Act was 'half a joke and half an attempt on the part of the Southern congressmen to force Northern industrial states to abandon the passage of the bill', p. 41.

fade, disappear and even lose ground when the vote was gained, lay in its failure to challenge the patriarchal ideology at a sufficiently deep and radical level to break the conditioning process of status, temperament and role'. 'Because the opposition was so strong and unrelenting, the struggle so long and bitter, the vote took on a disproportionate importance. And when the ballot was won, the feminist movement collapsed in what can only be described as exhaustion'. So 'the phase ended in reform rather than revolution'. The official resistance, she goes on, cannot completely account for the subsequent counter-revolution. In most places 'the sexual revolution collapsed from within'. Patriarchy remained in force simply because it lived on 'in the mind and heart'.

Kate Millett tries to justify the failures of the suffragette movement by reducing them to tactical mistakes induced by the nature of the opposition they faced. A proper examination of 'sexual revolution' would, however, require concepts that are not found in her theoretical vocabulary: those that describe economic and political forces not only in terms of sexual political ones. Her theoretical system fails, in fact, to account for any of the development she discusses. Why did the sexual revolution start in 1832? What was the social base of the movement? Its ideology? What was the historical situation in which it operated?

Compare what Waltraud Ireland wrote in *Lariatban*: While the women's rights movement initially 'stood on the principle of universal suffrage, with the coming of the industrial age [to the USA], the influx of large masses of poor immigrants and the rise of a terribly exploited working class, middle-class feminists, like their men, began worrying about what might happen if the down-trodden got the vote. Elizabeth C. Stanton [one of the founders of the movement] in her old age favoured an educational voting requirement, which was adopted by the unified suffrage movement in 1903.<sup>27</sup> Since the white native American women outnumbered the immigrant, uneducated vote, the women appealed to the worst race and class prejudices of men in arguing in favour of women's suffrage. . . . In 1903, with the tacit toleration of some and the active collaboration of the older abolitionists, the Northern-based suffrage movement formed an alliance with the white Southern suffragists movement, although the Southern women were arguing that the vote should be given to women in order to ensure white supremacy. (This argument was advanced as early as 1867 by an old abolitionist, Henry B. Blackwell<sup>28</sup> together with his wife, Lucy Stone, leader of the Conservative AWSA [American Women's Suffrage Association]. Blackwell argued that by giving the vote to women, the white electoral majority would be increased, ensuring the preservation of white supremacy'.<sup>29</sup> In England, a notable spokesman of the movement,

<sup>27</sup> Kate Millet argues that 'nearly inevitable factors contributed to its [the movement's] too frequently middle-class character; generally only women of this class enjoyed the leisure and education necessary for the endless effort the suffrage battle demanded'. The membership of the movement therefore depended ultimately on education. This was also E. Stanton's view.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Blackwell appears in Millett's book as 'a liberal gentleman and abolitionist' who abdicated his rights over his wife in a document full of 'period charm'.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Rise and Fall of the Suffrage Movement', *Lariatban*, May 1970.



Frances Power Cobb, declared: 'The difference, nay, rather the contrast should be insisted on between proposals to admit dregs of population to franchise, and those to admit mothers, daughters and sisters of those who already exercise it'.<sup>50</sup>

No doubt these views were not universally shared, but they are not insignificant either; they belong to the very founders of the movement. Kate Millett may call them 'patriarchal ideology' or present them merely as 'unsavoury dealings' but they have a more precise name: racial and class hatred.<sup>51</sup> The truth is that, in the last instance, class loyalty prevailed over sex loyalty: the education requirement voted by the unified American suffrage movement in 1903 unambiguously excluded a large majority of women, in line with the refusal to demand the vote for the 'dregs of society'.

The women's suffrage movement was fundamentally limited by the fact that many of the women inside it identified with the 'patriarchal society', but this does not mean that it was unimportant. Just as the specific character of the economic oppression of the proletariat only stands out more sharply after juridical equality of classes has been established (this equality in no way abolishing the antagonism between them) so too the peculiar character of man's domination of woman is brought out more clearly once the two are equal before the law. Moreover, the demand for suffrage provided a political arena upon which women could *organize* as women. Indeed the militancy of the suffragette movement at times surpassed that of the working class.

Just as we are given no realistic account by Millett of why 'sexual revolution' started, we are even less clear why counter-revolution occurred, particularly as, we are told, the suffrage movement collapsed from within. When she comes to describing counter-revolution there is nothing within her theoretical structure which can indicate how very special Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin were. And yet, it is in dealing with these two exceptional cases that we find her groping for criteria other than those supplied by her theory.

### The Twenties and Thirties

There was a sharp dislocation between the ideology and the practice of Nazi Germany, which Millett reveals most impressively. On the one hand, the Nazi propaganda machine daily hammered out the theme that German women were to dedicate themselves to motherhood and family. This ideology was supported by a series of measures to strengthen the family. On the other hand the number of women employed rose sharply under Nazi rule. Although Hitler made it clear that the Nazis desired 'no women to throw grenades', most of the new female labour force was employed in the armament industry. At the same time women

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<sup>50</sup> Felicity Trodd, 'Why Do We Want To Be Liberated?' *Socialist Woman*, November–December 1970.

<sup>51</sup> An attempt to show how racial, class and sex ideology interlock has been made by Mary Kelly, 'National Liberation and Women's Liberation', *Shrew*, December 1970. This article is only the beginning of a wider theoretical project.

were being withdrawn from higher jobs and education and thrown back onto the labour market as unqualified workers.

The second case discussed (without any transition) is the Soviet Union. The author contrasts Russia under Lenin with its subsequent development and here her argument becomes perceptibly more complex. 'After the Bolshevik revolution', she writes, 'every possible law was passed to free the individual from the claim of the family: free marriage and divorce, contraception, abortion on demand. Most material of all, the women and children were to be liberated from the controlling economic power of the husband. Under the collective system, the family began to disintegrate along the very lines upon which it has been built'.

In December 1917 and October 1918, Lenin passed two decrees 'which invalidated the prerogatives of males over their dependents and affirmed the complete right to economic, social and sexual self-determination in women, declaring it a matter of course that they freely choose their own domicile, name and citizenship . . . One cannot legislate a sexual revolution by decree, as Lenin was aware, and efforts were made to make the financial independence of both women and children a reality: nurseries were to be established, housekeeping was to be collectivized . . . maternity leave would be granted, and women welcomed on an equal footing into the labour force . . . '.

And yet, the sexual revolution lost to counter-revolution. 'The chief cause appears to be the difficulty in establishing a complete social revolution when one was overwhelmed, as the Russians were, with both political . . . and economic problems (women were declared economically independent but this scarcely made them so, particularly in the NEP period of unemployment)'. The communal housekeeping and creches failed to materialize. The burden of childcare and housework was left to women alone, as fathers often neglected their responsibilities. Urged into employment, women found themselves being awarded a triple responsibility: job, children, housework.

In fact 'the great masses of women, illiterate, submissive after centuries of subordination, with little realization of their rights, could scarcely take advantage of the new freedoms to the degree that men could'. Marxist theory, as Millett correctly observes, 'failed to supply a sufficient ideological base for a sexual revolution'. Soviet leadership 'made the family defunct in a society composed entirely of family members, whose whole psychic processes were formed in the patriarchal society of Tsarist Russia'. A proper integration of sexual into social revolution failed mainly for economic reasons, but also as a result of inadequate theoretical (and political) preparation.

This explanation raises a number of questions. To start with, it raises the whole question of equality again. The Bolshevik revolution gave women equal rights—for the first time in history. It in fact succeeded in putting into practice something which bourgeois ideology has preached for more than a century—the equality of all people irrespective of their sex, religion, nationality, etc—but which bourgeois society was unable to execute, due to its unwillingness to transgress the limits of private

property. And yet, in practice this equality often imposed further hardship on women. Given the social structure of Russia and the nature of women's oppression there, one is bound to conclude that the problem of women demanded an *inequality* of treatment with respect to men.

Marx wrote in a relevant passage in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that equal right is by its very nature a right of inequality, like every other right, because it applies an equal standard to different individuals (or sexes); the unequal individuals are measured by an equal standard in so far as they are viewed from one angle only, e.g. as workers.<sup>32</sup> Thus for revolution to liberate women not only is a large women's movement a precondition, but also the inequality of women—the *specificity* of their oppression—must be fully understood.

The second question raised by Kate Millett's account is that of what she calls 'psychic processes'. If the Bolsheviks failed because, among other things, they tried to abolish the family in a society 'composed entirely of family members, whose whole psychic processes were formed in the patriarchal family of Tsarist Russia', what implications does this have for the revolution in a capitalist society, which will have the task of dismantling the family in a society composed entirely of family members whose 'psychic processes' have been formed in the 'patriarchal family' of that society?

The patriarchal family, claims Millett, is *the* agent of the patriarchal order in that it socializes the individual along the stereotyped lines of sexual categories. But the family does more than that: it educates the child to fit into the existing social structure and its authority, system of values, modes of relation between people, attitudes to property, etc. All these become the very foundation of the individual personality because, from a strategic point of view, the family is extremely well placed: it seizes the individual from the very moment of birth. The specific mechanisms of this process were only identified with Freud. 'One of the "effects" of the humanization of the small biological creature that results from human parturition: there in its place is the object of psychoanalysis, an object which has a simple name: *the unconscious*'. Psychoanalysis has, therefore, as its object 'the "effects" prolonged into the surviving adult, of the extraordinary adventure which from birth to the liquidation of the Oedipal phase transforms a small animal conceived by a man and a woman into a small human child. . . . This object is no business of the biologist's: this story is certainly not biological!—since from the beginning it is completely dominated by the constraint of the sexed human order that each mother engraves on the small human animal in maternal "love" or hatred'.<sup>33</sup> Althusser points to the importance of a 'discussion of the forms of *familial ideology*, and the crucial role they play in initiating the functioning of the instance that

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<sup>32</sup> In *State and Revolution* Lenin comments on this passage in Marx: 'Equal right we certainly have here, but it is still a "bourgeois right" . . . really a violation of equality and an injustice. . . . The first phase of communism, therefore, cannot yet produce justice and equality; but the exploitation of man by man will become impossible because it will be impossible to seize the means of production . . . as private property.'

<sup>33</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Freud and Lacan', NLR 55.

Freud called "the unconscious", but which should be re-christened as soon as a better form is found. This mention of the forms of familial ideology (the ideology of paternity-maternity-conjugality-infancy and their interactions) is crucial, for it implies the following conclusion . . . that *no theory of psychoanalysis can be produced without basing it on historical materialism* (on which the theory of the formation of familial ideology depends, in the last instance).<sup>34</sup>

"To fill the needs of conservative societies and population too reluctant or too perplexed to carry out a revolutionary change . . . a number of new prophets arrived upon the scene", writes Millett. "The most influential of these was Sigmund Freud, beyond question the strongest individual counter-revolutionary force in the ideology of sexual politics during the period." This view of Freud as an *enemy* is extremely widespread in the women's liberation movement today. But, at the same time, this movement, like the Gay Liberation movement, has in fact integrated the conclusions of Freud's science into its ideology—even if such an appraisal at the level of theory is still absent. Psychoanalysis has, in a way, become a part of commonsense. The women's liberation movement today, in its preoccupation with the family as the key socializing agency, is a testimony to the revolutionary scope of Freud's theory.

The revolt of the blacks, students, women and 'the poor' may, Millett argues, produce another sexual revolution. But women are in alliance with them, it seems, as long as they are all *passive* objects of exploitation and oppression. Once they take up the method of violent confrontation with the social order, whether the state or various capitalist institutions, Kate Millett parts company with them. Violence in her mind is male. In an interview that she gave after the publication of her book she declared: 'Women's lib is going to be the greatest revolutionary movement in history because it is going to avoid all the fascist traps of the male mind. But not unless we face the resurgence of all that masculine shit that's coming out of women who have learned politics from men'. Asked if she envisaged a violent revolution, Millett replied: 'I'm talking about a change in the way we live. If you want a violent revolution, O.K., go and buy your guns, I'll go over and do feminism in England or someplace else. We have fascism already. We get it from being stupidly violent. . . . *A revolutionary is a changer, a teacher*. Somebody who hangs in and keeps at it and keeps loving people, until they change their heads. . . . The trouble is all these women want to play war because their boyfriends do and they think it's radical. . . . We've got to get rid of it, or we're not going to make it. . . . There'll just be more of the same old garbage'.<sup>35</sup> Once again we find the familiar equation: men = violence; women = love.

### Conclusion

In this review I have tried to isolate certain basic themes in the three

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> *University Review*, No. 11, New York 1970.

books under discussion; this has inevitably meant that I have not been able to do them full justice. Greer, for example, gives an eloquent description of the miseries of family life. Millett does much to dispel the piety with which literary figures such as D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller or Norman Mailer are often viewed; her sardonic and scrupulous textual analysis exposes the vulgar fantasy and crude male chauvinism which characterize their treatment of sex. Figs shows how many of the most iconoclastic masters of bourgeois thought—Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche, Darwin, Freud—were incapable of going beyond a banal conformism on the subject of the social position of women. But the themes which I have attempted to isolate indicate some of the fundamental weaknesses in all three books.

The premise, common to Greer, Figs and Millett, that the man-woman antagonism is the *primary* one leads them inevitably into a theoretical and practical impasse: either moralism (and hence strategic impotence), or reformism. Both Millett and Greer accept the stereotyped image of women, and counterpose 'female' qualities to 'male' ones. They recognize that a drastic change in the social order is necessary to liberate women, but they do not identify this 'change' with anything as concrete as the overthrow of capitalism. Indeed, they fail to pose in any serious fashion the problem of how the 'change' can be brought about at all—Millett contenting herself with calling for a 'revolution in consciousness', Greer with wishful fantasies, and both short-circuiting discussion in a common rejection of 'violence'. Figs has the merit of being free from such ultimately romantic ideas on women. She correctly refuses any 'equal but different' status as an objective for women, and insists on the possibility of, and necessity for, integral equality between men and women. But because she constructs a history of ideas divorced from any real historical context, her history becomes an undifferentiated sea of rampant male chauvinism, and the amelioration of women's position is seen in terms of gradual reform over time; this perspective does not involve her in even the romantic rejection of the existing social order which characterizes Greer and Millett.

The women's liberation movement poses difficult theoretical and practical problems for Marxists, both inside the movement and outside it. Perhaps hardest, and most crucial, of all is to develop an analysis which at once recognizes the immense potential of this new and growing radicalization of significant sectors of the female population in the advanced capitalist countries, and at the same time faces up to the overwhelmingly non-Marxist, often explicitly and bitterly anti-Marxist, ideology which characterizes the women's liberation movement. To some extent, this is a response to the failure of Marxism itself to develop a fully worked out and adequate theory of the role of the family in advanced capitalism, or of the specificity of women's oppression. Nevertheless, it is not therefore something which Marxists should refrain from confronting, and indeed a critique of the dominant ideology of the women's liberation movement and the development of a more adequate theory of the family and of female oppression must inevitably go hand in hand. It is in this spirit that I have tried to discuss certain of the central themes in these three books. It should be clear that all three

books will be valuable weapons for the women's liberation movement itself, and will help to radicalize many women—as well as men.

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## *Two Comments*

*Robin Blackburn writes:* Branka Magas' article touches on two themes to be found in much writing on the oppression of women. One is the very common rejection of Freud because of the blatant sexism which he frequently expressed, the other is a rejection of violence in the name of supposedly feminine values. It seems very likely that the presence of these commonly encountered positions is linked to a complementary absence.

The frequency with which Freud is rejected wholesale is matched by the frequency with which the problem of the oppression of children and minors within the family is ignored in writing on women's oppression and women's liberation. Of course it is true that the concept of patriarchy is often invoked—and in its colloquial rather than its strictly anthropological sense. But although this term might seem to draw attention to parental domination of children a discussion of this aspect of the problem rarely follows. Perhaps the term 'patriarchal' in any case carries with it the unnecessary assumption that it is only men who exercise such domination. It is more likely to be the case that women are somewhat more responsible than men for parental authoritarianism since the familial socialization of children is a part of their bondage. The fact that the attitudes of working-class 'housewives' and 'mothers' are, in conventional political terms, more reactionary than those of working-class men could well relate to this socialization nexus.

The work of the housewife and mother is not in essence less oppressive than that of her husband, but it is less evidently so. The power of the mother over the children furnishes a false compensation for this oppression which is very difficult to refuse, especially since it is inextricably bound up with a copious stock of traditional sentiments on the joys of motherhood. Whereas the worker is unlikely to have the illusion that he controls or owns the fruit of his labour, both parents, and perhaps especially the mother, are culturally encouraged to feel that in some sense they have special rights of possession over their biological product.<sup>1</sup>

Stated baldly such ideas amount to little more than speculation. But it is most unlikely that any scientific understanding of this complex of problems can be achieved by an outright rejection of Freud on the grounds of his reactionary remarks on women, even if these are taken in a prescriptive rather than descriptive sense. Clearly psychoanalysis places the parent/child relationship right at the centre of its investigations and renders impossible any simple neglect of the subject. This can lead either to ideologies of motherhood (Melanie Klein) and love

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that there are many women workers does not invalidate this since the overwhelming balance of their time, and the bias of their self-identification, lies in the home. On workers' attitudes see R. Fraser (ed) *Work I & II*.

(Fromm) but also to a potentially liberating examination of the mechanism of repression and manipulation (Reich/Laing, etc). This thesis is confirmed *a contrario* by the one recent book on women's oppression which tackles the problem of the oppression of children (Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*) since the author also seeks to extract the revolutionary kernel of Freudian psychoanalysis.

An overhasty rejection of Freud and all his works is not only liable to be accompanied by insensitivity towards the oppression of children, but, given the symbiosis of the oppression of children and women, it must also lead to an inadequate account of the oppression of women themselves. The difficult task of developing a theory which gets to the root of the oppression of women in its specificity is replaced by an explicit or implicit resort to the analogy of some other form of oppression. The 'radical' solution is often to assimilate the exploitation of women to class exploitation or national oppression. But with surprising frequency this apparently radical solution at the theoretical level is accompanied by pacificism at the political level.

The logic underlying this seems to be roughly as follows. The contradiction men/women is similar to the contradiction bourgeoisie/proletariat or the contradiction imperialism/national liberation. But only a very few will assert that the contradiction between men and women is antagonistic in the sense that it must be resolved by the violent suppression of the former in favour of the latter: for the rest the contradiction is ultimately non-antagonistic (even in Mao's sense, 'within the people') and thus not to be resolved primarily by force (though, of course, some forms of physical confrontation are by no means excluded). But as at the theoretical level it has been maintained that women's oppression is fundamentally similar to that of an oppressed nation or class then the resolution of these contradictions must also be accomplished without resort to real violence. In this way the absence of a theory of the specificity of women's oppression (which would probably have to draw on both psychoanalysis and Marxism), and a blindness to the violence that parents practise on children, leads to a rejection of the emancipatory role that violence can have in politics. Ideology quite spontaneously fills the vacuum left by theory and force is consigned to the rubbish heap of 'male politics', in the name of a female stereotype which is an integral part of the culture of male domination. The failure of Marxists themselves to produce an adequate theory of this field is, of course, equally to be blamed for all this. Until they do, unscientific analogies and erroneous political conclusions drawn from them are likely to flourish. And just as ideology fills the vacuum left by theory, so liberalism or pacifism will fill the vacuum left by revolutionary politics.

*Lucien Rey writes:* The main purpose of Branka Magas's article, as I understand it, is to show that there are a number of crucial theoretical shortcomings in the three books she is reviewing. For instance, they are confused about the concept of 'equality', they have an unrealistic historical perspective, they underplay the concepts of 'class' and 'property' and overplay 'sexual politics' and man-woman oppression—

in short, none of them could be properly called Marxist. Subsidiary to this, and less explicit, I think the article has a second purpose, which is to claim that the theoretical bases for a correct analysis of women's oppression are to be found in Engels' *Origins* and in the writings of Freud.

It has become traditional on the left to contrast 'Marxism' with 'feminism' and this kind of contrast seems to me to colour the strategy Magas adopts towards these books, concentrating on their shortcomings and implying the existence (potential, perhaps, but not too distant) of an alternative Marxist model. I think this is far from the truth. As far as I can judge, there is little of value written on women's oppression within the Marxist tradition and perhaps even less within the Freudian tradition. I am also extremely suspicious of the Marxism/feminism contrast.

I would like to give an example to show why I am so doubtful. An important section of Magas's article is devoted to Eva Figs's attack on Rousseau. There is a good reason for this. Rousseau is widely regarded by Marxists as prefiguring the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Lenin. Yet Figs characterizes him as a particularly rabid sexist and it is obviously impossible to refute this. The temptation, which Magas avoids, without drawing the full conclusions from her own argument, is to separate the good, 'revolutionary' Rousseau from the bad 'sexist' Rousseau and weigh one against the other, balancing the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* against *Emile*, *La Nouvelle Heloise*, etc. }

This seems to me to put matters the wrong way round. The fact that Rousseau was a rabid sexist surely casts doubts on the claim that he prefigures Marxism and Leninism, yet this is a problem which is *totally ignored* by Marxist commentaries on Rousseau, including those of Della Volpe, Colletti and Althusser. Figs remarks that reading the *Social Contract* you might imagine mankind was uni-sexual and you might still imagine this after reading Della Volpe, Colletti and Althusser as well.

An important *absence* in the *Social Contract* is any definition of 'citizen'. When we turn to the project for a new constitution for Corsica, we are enlightened. A citizen is to be a property-owner, male, married, with at least two children—not just a man, but a *paterfamilias* as well. For Rousseau the family was the basic and indissoluble unit of society. In this way, his sexism is integrated into his political thought. Moreover, he had to exclude women from citizenship, *necessarily*, once he admitted an essential difference between men and women, because the whole concept of the general will involved homogeneity of the populace (hence, of course, the vision of a society of small property-owners who could be expected to think alike; hence the Rousseau-an arguments for the *loi Chapelier* outlawing trade unions during the Revolution). }

Magas points out, quite rightly, that underlying Rousseau's political philosophy is 'petty commodity production', to be superseded by large-scale capitalist production in the next century. The Alpine small-holder and craftsman gave way to the Lancashire cotton miller, etc. Rousseau's proto-Romanticism was wedded to a dying economic class;



he himself was anti-expansionist, anti-accumulation of capital, anti-urban, anti-technology, etc. Yet he has not died with that class; his ideology has not become moribund in the slightest—sexism, nostalgia, flight from technology, all these things are still with us, even flourishing. It seems to be inescapable that Romanticism has all along been functional in some way to large-scale capitalism, perhaps—paradoxically enough—more so than classical liberalism.

Yet there is no Marxist critique of Romanticism and there are important schools of Marxism endlessly rehabilitating Romanticism and even merging it with Marxism. To my mind, the chief merit of Figes's book is that it launches an attack on Romanticism and traces a tradition of sexist ideology through from Rousseau and Hegel. This attack is definitely patchy and leaves a lot to be desired but it is a start. I think it is more valuable about Rousseau than Colletti or Althusser precisely because it says what they don't say, because she reads in Rousseau what they don't read. (Naturally their level of argument and culture is much higher, more scientific, but that's not the point at issue.)

Marxism is *incomplete*. This seems very clear to me after reading these books. Marxism has not yet produced the concepts which would enable us to criticize them convincingly. I do not feel it is much use going back to Engels. To being with, the Bachofen-Morgan-Engels *mutterrecht* version of pre-history is completely discredited. I think anyone that has read the attacks on it of Malinovsky, Leach and Lévi-Strauss must agree this. Moreover, I don't think that Engels' *Origins* is even internally coherent. It is marred from the start by eugenicist and Darwinist deformations. It refers to the abduction and purchase of women as occurring long before the institution of monogamy which is supposed to inaugurate their oppression. I cannot make head or tail of Engels's remarks on the changing 'scarcity' of women. The whole concept of hetairism and its survival in feudalism is a mystery to me. In fact, I think it is speculative, garbled and inaccurate. Of course, it's a sympathetic text because Engels was something of a feminist, but it has no scientific value.

Evidently, it is true to say that Engels links the oppression of women with the class struggle, but I think that is about the extent of his usefulness. A Marxist would do that anyway even if the *Origins* had never been written. (I should add that I think Magas is completely right in criticizing Kate Millett's interpretation of Engels.) The problem is that Engels says very little about the specific forms of women's oppression in capitalist society. This brings us to Freud. Magas comes to Freud's defence, in measured terms, against the onslaught unleashed by Figes and Millett. The heart of the matter is obviously the Oedipus complex, the keystone of Freud's theory. It seems to me that writers like Figes and Millett (or Viola Klein in her 1946 *The Feminine Character*) put objections to the whole Oedipal theory which are impossible to gainsay. Nevertheless I am sure that Freud posed the problem correctly, enabled us to think about the problem theoretically. He avoids the two obvious traps. He does not countenance either the physical inheritance or the role learning hypotheses on sex differences. It is clear that the Freudian maxim 'anatomy is destiny' is true in the sense that in a world in which

the two sexes are two separate categories the principal *criterion* for entry in infancy into one or the other is the presence/absence of the penis/vagina. Any explanation made by the child himself/herself of why he/she must enter one or other destiny must be dependent on perceiving an anatomical difference. Why else is one door opened, the other shut? Granted this, the moment of sex differentiation must be a moment also of libidinal re-structuring. Anatomy, concept-formation and psychology converge at a critical point.

It is for this reason that I am unsympathetic to Reich's rejection of the Oedipus complex which simply reflects his vulgar-materialist outlook, which marks so much of his work, from the beginning of his career to the end: scientism, over-emphasis on the orgasm, emphasis on posture rather than words, etc.

The idea of a synthesis of Marx and Freud may be simply a chimera; certainly, if it is to be achieved, it will require an enormous task of re-thinking. It is for this reason that I feel the feminist critique of Rousseau, Hegel, Freud, etc, is so important. At this moment, it is more important than the Marxist critique of Greer, Figea, Millett, etc. Naturally, this must be done too, but it is a question of priorities. Feminism is not incompatible with Marxism: in fact, they are mutually necessary. The process of Marxizing feminism can only take place *pari passu* with the process of feminizing Marxism.

The understanding of this must clearly have political implications. Marxists have been regrettably imprecise about the relationship of the struggles of the oppressed (sex, race, etc) and the working-class struggle. It could be correct not only for women to organize themselves here and now, but also to do so if and when there was a revolutionary party (the famous Leninist party), even to the extent of forming their own party, if the alternative was a male-dominated party—as it probably would be: all revolutionary parties so far have been male-dominated. This means of course rejecting the idea of associated or auxiliary (i.e. subordinate) women's movements. This is always attacked as being divisive but then to perpetuate oppression, even the forms of oppression, in the revolutionary party itself is divisive too, I would have thought. Evidently, separate organization does not preclude mutual support, joint action, etc. And, of course, finally (when?) the two parties should merge, on the grounds that the women's organization was stronger or that there was an accepted basis of feminist-Marxist ideas and institutions, a more complete Marxism than we yet have. It is the revolutionary duty of all Marxists to struggle towards this goal, against sexism and against dogmatism.

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Stuart Hood translated Hans Magnus Enzensburger's *The Consciousness Industry* in NLR 64, and John Mathews translated Lucio Magri's article in the present issue

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Literature and Sociology

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Robin Murray

**Capital and the Nation State**

Böran Therborn

**Habermas: A New Eclectic**

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In the thirties a naïve and reductionist form of British Marxism approached the terrain of literary criticism and was decisively repelled by the group of critics associated with the Leavises and the Cambridge magazine 'Scrutiny'. Primitive dualities of base and superstructure were no match for the concrete critical achievements and combative morality of the Leavises and their associates. Yet in many ways this was a Pyrrhic victory and not the least asset of the article by Raymond Williams with which we open this issue is that it clearly restates the problems and impasses with which the British empiricist sensibility—however virtuous—will always be confronted. The occasion for his reflections was a lecture in memory of Lucien Goldmann. His meditation on the irruption over the last ten years of concepts and theories traditionally anathema in British academic circles is an invitation to explore the intellectual problems raised by Goldmann's work. For these reasons NLR is very glad to publish his lecture, which represents an illuminating development in his own thought.

In the development in recent years of a Marxist theory of the economic relations between imperialist countries and the under-developed capitalist world the work of Andre Gunder Frank has played a pioneering role. His researches have demonstrated the ways in which imperialism warps and retards the economy of the backward areas it dominates, leading only to the type of development which corresponds to the needs of the metropolis. Frank has argued that this process of 'developing under-development' has been underway for a long time in Latin America. For at least two centuries

capitalist social relations have predominated there and feudal residues are almost non-existent. This analysis concludes that to speak of an unfinished bourgeois revolution against remnants of a feudal order is quite erroneous. Moreover, since the Latin American bourgeoisie is structurally integrated by imperialism any political strategy based on a supposedly anti-imperialist wing of the bourgeoisie, a 'national bourgeoisie', is fundamentally misconceived. In a study of Argentina published in NLR 62, Ernesto Laclau sought to qualify the argument that imperialism will always merely 'develop under-development', in this issue he addresses himself directly to the work of Gunder Frank. Laclau argues that Frank's analysis depends too much on the process of exchange and too little upon a study of the underlying mode of production, and that the latter can often be shown to be pre-capitalist up to recent times. Laclau does not seek to rehabilitate the political strategies so devastatingly criticized by Frank; rather he wishes to develop a precise and scientific account of the Latin American social formations which can inform Marxist analysis of contemporary imperialism.

In recent numbers of the review, Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband have debated the political role of the State in metropolitan capitalism. The economic functions of the bourgeois State have not often received equivalent attention and we are therefore glad to print Robin Murray's pioneering essay on this subject. His analysis is particularly important, because it poses with great clarity the conceptual and empirical problems raised by the contradiction between internationalized capitalist enterprise and a world political system still organized and dominated by the nation-state—of which the ongoing contest between the oil cartel and the producer countries of the Middle East is one spectacular manifestation. Much of the contemporary development of Marxist political economy hinges on its ability to provide a scientific account of the relationship between the two.

In NLR 63 we published a critique of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse by Göran Therborn. In this number the same author extends this critique to the most influential of the younger members of the Frankfurt school, Jürgen Habermas. The older generation were important primarily for their influence on student militants. Habermas has no such influence because of his reactionary stand against the German student movement. But he does influence young sociologists attempting to construct an oppositional 'critical sociology'. Therborn demonstrates the dangers of this project and argues for the development of scientific Marxism as the revolutionary alternative.



Raymond Williams

## Literature and Sociology: in memory of Lucien Goldmann

Last spring Lucien Goldmann came to Cambridge and gave two lectures. It was an opportunity for many of us to hear a man whose work we had welcomed and respected. And he said that he liked Cambridge: to have trees and fields this near to lecture-rooms. I invited him and he agreed to come back again this year. More particularly we agreed to exchange our current work directly, for we were both aware of the irony that the short physical distance between England and France converts, too often, to a great cultural distance, and especially at the level of detail. And then, in the autumn, he died, at the age of 57. The beginning of a project had to revert to print, as must perhaps always finally happen. But first I want to remember him directly, as an act of respect and as an active acknowledgment of what I believe is now necessary: a bringing together and a discussion of work and ideas occurring in very different traditions but nevertheless sharing many common positions and concerns. My regret, of course, is that he cannot be here to take part in the dialogue\*. For the manner of his lectures in Cambridge was precisely dialogue: in a sense to my

surprise, having read only his published writings, which are marked by a certain defining and systematic rigour.

I think many people have now noticed the long-term effects of the specific social situation of British intellectuals: a situation which is changing but with certain continuing effects. In humane studies, at least, and with mixed results, British thinkers and writers are continually pulled back towards ordinary language: not only in certain rhythms and in choices of words, but also in a manner of exposition which can be called unsystematic but which also represents an unusual consciousness of an immediate audience: a sharing and equal-standing community, to which it is equally possible to defer or to reach out. I believe that there are many positive aspects of this habitual manner, but I am just as sure that the negative aspects are serious: a willingness to share, or at least not too explicitly to challenge, the consciousness of the group of which the thinker and writer—his description as intellectual raises the precise point—is willingly or unwillingly but still practically a member. And while this group, for so long, and of course especially in places like Cambridge, was in effect and detail a privileged and at times a ruling class, this pull towards ordinary language was often, is often, a pull towards current consciousness: a framing of ideas within certain polite but definite limits.

It is not at all surprising to me, having observed this process, to see so many students, since the early 'sixties, choosing to go instead to intellectuals of a different kind. In sociology, where we have been very backward—indeed in many respects an undeveloped country—there are, of course, other reasons. But the same thing has happened in literary studies, where for half a century, and in Cambridge more clearly than anywhere, there has been notable and powerful work. A sense of certain absolute restrictions in English thought, restrictions which seemed to link very closely with certain restrictions and deadlocks in the larger society, made the search for alternative traditions, alternative methods, imperative. Of course all the time there was American work: in what appeared the same language but outside this particular English consensus. Theory, or at least system, seemed attractively available. And most American intellectuals, for good or ill, seemed not to have shared this particular integration with a non-intellectual class. Complaints that a man explaining his life's work, in as precise a way as he could, was not instantly comprehensible, in a clubbable way, to someone who had just happened to drop in from his labour or leisure elsewhere, seemed less often to arise.

And it was then noticeable that in certain kinds of study the alternative manner became attractive and was imitated: at times substantially, in the long reach for theory; at times more superficially, in certain habits of procedural abstraction: the numbered heads and sub-heads of an argument; definitions attaining the sudden extra precision of italics; the highly specialised and internal vocabulary. Everybody except the

English, it suddenly seemed, thought or at least wrote in this way. To rely on other kinds of order and emphasis was a provincial foible. A break with the English bourgeoisie, in particular, seemed to demand these alternative procedures and styles, as one of the few practical affiliations that could be made at once and by an act of will.

But really the situation was more complicated. It needed Chomsky, in his specialist work a very rigorous thinker, to remind us how easily the abstract methods and vocabulary of a particular social science could be used to achieve another kind of consensus, with a fundamentally abstract ruling class and administration. As in one of his examples, the bombing of refugee peasants in Vietnam could be described, in a show of procedure, as accelerated urbanization. Very aware of this danger, which does not have to be called but can be called dehumanising and mystifying, English thinkers could easily, too easily, fall back on their older habits, professing not to understand abstractions like a power structure though they could traditionally understand a microcosm, or not to understand reification though they could understand the objective correlative, or not to know mediation although they knew catharsis. Certain received habits of mind, a very particular and operative selection of traditional and pre-democratic concepts and adjustments, acquired, by what one has to call alchemy, the status of concrete, or of minute particulars. Yet the more clearly one saw this happening, the more clearly one had also to see the genuinely mixed results of a social situation in which intellectuals had little choice but to define themselves as a separate profession: able then to see more clearly into the society which would appoint but not embrace them, acquiring a separate and self-defining language and manner which at least was not limited by the more immediate prejudices and encouragements, but was nevertheless a language and a manner of the monograph and the rostrum: a blackboard numbering, a dictated emphasis, a pedagogic insistence on repeatable definitions: habits which interacted strangely with the genuine rigour of new and bold inquiries and terms.

### Problems of Theory

Lucien Goldmann, a thinker trained in this major continental tradition, born in Bucharest and moving to Vienna, to Geneva, to Brussels, to Paris, had at once this separated mobility and this impersonality: very clearly in the style of his work. But it was very interesting to me, having read his work presented in those familiar ways, to hear the voice of a different mind: mobility in that other sense—the quick emotional flexibility, the varying stares at his audience, the pacing up and down of this smiling man in his open-necked shirt, more concerned with a cigarette than with notes but concerned above all with the challenge of his argument, a challenge that evidently included himself. There was a sense of paradox: of amused but absolute seriousness, of provisional but passionate conviction; a kind of self-deprecating and self-asserting boldness. Perhaps the paradox was Goldmann in Cambridge, but it may be more.

For I think we cannot doubt that in sociology and in literary studies we

are living through a paradox, and this presents itself to us in many different ways but most evidently as a problem of style. The basic form of the paradox is this: that we need theory, but that certain limits of existence and consciousness prevent us from getting it, or at least making certain of it; and yet the need for theory keeps pressing on our minds and half-persuading us to accept kinds of pseudo-theory which as a matter of fact not only fail to satisfy us but often encourage us to go on looking in the wrong place and in the wrong way. An idea of theory suggests laws and methods, indeed a methodology. But the most available concept of laws, and from it the most available organized methods, come in fact, as Goldmann reminded us, from studies that are wholly different in kind: from the physical sciences, where the matter to be studied can be held to be objective, where value-free observations can then be held to be possible, as a foundation for disinterested research, and so where the practice of hard, rigorous, factual disciplines can seem—indeed can impressively be—feasible.

And then I think it is clear that the existence, in works of literature, of material so laden with values that if we do not deal directly with them, we have literally nothing to deal with, leads to an obvious crisis in the whole context of a university which defines itself, more and more, in terms of rigorous, specialist, disinterested disciplines. It is hardly surprising that in England it has been literary critics, and above all Leavis, who have led the opposition to what Goldmann calls 'scientism'. The record in sociology has been less clear and, I would say, less honourable. For of course it is possible in social studies, by acts of delimitation, isolation, definition, to produce or project certain kinds of objective material which can be held to be value-free because none of the connections to the rest of experience or to other kinds of relationship are made. Even values themselves can be studied in this way, as in a more or less sophisticated opinion polling: that while a percentage believes this another percentage believes that, and this result, until the next time, is the end of the research. And I wouldn't want to say that the results of these kinds of work mightn't contribute, very valuably, to the central business of social studies, which because it must deal with men in social relationships and in history must, whether it knows it or not, deal with active values and with choices, including the values and choices of the observer. All I am saying is that in the end it is this centre that is absent, or is insufficiently present; and that from this very default, compounded by the historical failure to develop British social studies in any adequate way (and we remember the difficulty of getting them established in Cambridge at all), the claim began to be made that in literature, in English, where values and their discussion were explicit, a real centre, a humane centre, might be found.

But this is where the central problem of the relation between literature and social studies at once arises. We must not think, by the way, that in literary as in social studies the pursuit of the falsely objective wasn't undertaken. The classical languages, and by hasty derivation their literatures, could be studied by a rigorous internal methodology, which has had its effect on nearly all literary studies. The study of other languages in the same spirit, by isolated set texts and the like, has similarly been inserted into the process of literary study, often ex-

plicity as a way of providing at least some rigorous discipline. In our own studies of the very rich and important English medieval literature, such internal methodologies, and a relative isolation from active questions of value and of history, have made considerable headway. Everything is again justifiable, in its own immediate terms; it is the connection of those terms to the central inquiry that has become problematic or, more graciously, ultimate.

The outstanding difference between physical and humane studies is not only a matter of inevitable questions of expressed and active values. It is also a matter of the fact of change: that societies and literatures have active histories, which are always inseparable from active values. But in literary as in some social, historical and anthropological studies these facts of change can be projected into an apparent totality which has the advantage of containing them and thus of making them at last, like the rocks, stand still. In literature the most common of these false totalities is tradition, which is seen not as it is, an active and continuous selection and reselection, which even at its latest point in time is always a specific choice, but now more conveniently as an object, a projected reality, with which we have to come to terms on its terms, even though those terms are always and must be the valuations, the selections and omissions, of other men. The idea of a fixed syllabus is the most ordinary methodological product of just this assumption. And of course, given this kind of totality, the facts of change can then be admitted, but in particular ways. We can be positively invited to study the history of literature: only now not as change but as variation, a series of variations within a static totality: the characteristics of this period and the characteristics of that other; just as in empirical history we come to know this period and that, but the 'and' is not stressed, or is in any case understood as temporal variation rather than as qualitative change.

Similar false totalities have been very widely projected in economics, in political theory, in anthropology and even in contemporary sociology, where variation is seen as a fact but as only a fact, which does not necessarily involve us with the disturbing process of active values and choices. Certainly, as is so often said, we cannot do without the facts, and it is a hard, long effort to get them. But this persuasive empiricism is founded, from the beginning, on the assumption that the facts can be made to stand still, and to be, as we are, disinterested. Theory, we are told, can come later, but the important point is that it is there, tacitly, from the beginning, in the methodological assumption of a static, passive and therefore empirically available totality. The most obvious example, from literary studies, is the methodology of the study of 'kinds' or 'genres'. There, making all the empirical work possible, is the prior assumption of the existence, within the 'body' of literature, of such 'permanent forms' as epic, tragedy, or romance, and then all our active study is of variations within them, variations that may be admitted to have proximate causes, even a social history, but that in their essential features are taken in practice as autonomous, with internal laws: an *a priori* and idealist assumption which prevents us not only from seeing the important history of the generation of such forms, which whatever might be said are never in fact timeless, but

also from seeing those radical and qualitative changes, within the nominal continuity of the forms, which are often of surpassing importance in themselves and which indeed, at times, make a quite different method of study, a method not depending on that kind of general classification, imperative.

### The Limits of 'Practical Criticism'

Yet it is on none of these methods, with their apparent objectivity, that the claim of literature to be the central human study has rested. It has been on 'practical criticism', which deserves attention in itself and because it is from this, paradoxically, that much of the English work in literary sociology has come. I know Goldmann would have been surprised—every visitor is surprised—to meet the full intensity, the extraordinary human commitment, of this particular and local allegiance. In his attack on 'scientism' he might for a moment have assumed that there were Cambridge allies, who had attacked the same thing in the same word. But this wouldn't have lasted long. Goldmann's attack on scientism—the uncritical transfer of method from the physical to the human sciences—was above all in the name of a critical sociology; whereas that word 'sociology' has only to be mentioned, in practical-critical circles, to provoke the last sad look at the voluntarily damned. And I would give it about fifteen minutes, as Goldmann began to describe his own methodology, for that crushing quotation to be brought out from Lawrence:

'We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon.'

So no methodology here, thank you; only sincere and vital emotion. But who decides the sincerity and vitality? If you need to ask that you couldn't begin to understand the answer. People decide it, in themselves and in an active and collaborative critical process.

But which people, in what social relationships, with each other and with others? That, at whatever risk of damnation, is the necessary question of the sociologist. Practical criticism is vulnerable at several points: in its hardening into an apparently objective method which is based, even defiantly, on subjective principles; in its isolation of texts from contexts; in its contemplative aspects, which have often made it hostile to new literary work. But all these weaknesses are most apparent, we say, when it is badly done: well or badly being again an internal criterion. In fact, however, all these weaknesses, or potential weaknesses, follow from the specific social situation of its practitioners. The real answer to that question—which people, in what social relationships?—was, as we all know, precise and even principled: the informed critical minority. What began as the most general kind of claim, a visibly human process centred on the apparently absolute qualities of sincerity and vitality, ended, under real pressures, as a self-defining group. But then, because the critical activity was real, very different social

relations—a sense of isolation from the main currents of a civilisation in which sincerity and vitality were being limited or destroyed, and an implacable opposition to all the agents of this limitation or destruction—emerged and forced a generalization of the original position. English literary sociology began, in effect, from this need of a radical critical group to locate and to justify its own activity and identity: the practical distinction of good literature from the mediocre and the bad—extending to studies of the cultural conditions underlying these differences of value—a critical history of literature and of culture; and then further extending, from its starting-point in critical activity, to one major element of these conditions, the nature of the reading-public. The particular interpretation then given was of course one of cultural decline; the radical isolation of the critical minority was in that sense both starting-point and conclusion. But any theory of cultural decline, or to put it more neutrally, of cultural crisis—and the practical critics had little difficulty in establishing *that*—acquires, inevitably, wider social explanations: in this case the destruction of an organic society by industrialism and by mass civilization.

In the 1930's this kind of diagnosis overlapped, or seemed to overlap, with other radical interpretations, and especially, perhaps, with the Marxist interpretation of the effects of capitalism. Yet almost at once there was a fundamental hostility between these two groups: a critical engagement between *Scrutiny* and the English Marxists, which we can have little doubt, looking back, *Scrutiny* won.

But why was this so? That the *Scrutiny* critics were much closer to literature, were not just fitting it in, rather hastily, to a theory conceived from other kinds, mainly economic kinds, of evidence? I believe this was so, but the real reason was more fundamental. Marxism, as then commonly understood, was weak in just the decisive areas where practical criticism was strong: in its capacity to give precise and detailed and reasonably adequate accounts of actual consciousness: not just a scheme or a generalization but actual works, full of rich and significant and specific experience. And the reason for the corresponding weakness in Marxism is not difficult to find: it lay in the received formula of base and superstructure, which in ordinary hands converted very quickly to an interpretation of superstructure as simple reflection, representation, ideological expression—simplicities which just will not survive any prolonged experience of actual works. It was the theory and practice of reductionism—the specific human experiences and acts of creation converted so quickly and mechanically into classifications which always found their ultimate reality and significance elsewhere—which in practice left the field open to anybody who could give an account of art which in its closeness and intensity at all corresponded to the real human dimension in which art works are made and valued.

I have said there was a victory, and it was indeed so crushing that in England, for a generation, even the original questions could hardly be raised. People already knew, or thought they knew, the answers. Still today, I have no doubt, the work of Lukács or of Goldmann can be quickly referred to that abandoned battlefield. What have they got, after all, but a slightly updated vocabulary and a new political lease of life?

I think they have more, much more, but I am sure we must remember that decisive engagement, for certain real things were learned in it, which make the specifically English contribution to the continuing inquiry still relevant, still active, however much any of us might want to join in the run from the English consensus to a quite other consciousness and vocabulary.

It was above all, as I have said, the received formula of base and superstructure which made Marxist accounts of literature and thought so often weak in practice. Yet to many people, still, this formula is near the centre of Marxism, and indicates its appropriate methodology for cultural history and criticism, and then of course for the relation between social and cultural studies. The economic base determines the social relations which determine consciousness which determines actual ideas and works. There can be endless debate about each of these terms, but unless something very like that is believed, Marxism appears to have lost its most specific and challenging position.

### The Social Totality

Now for my own part I have always opposed the formula of base and superstructure: not primarily because of its methodological weaknesses but because of its rigid, abstract and static character. Further, from my work on the nineteenth century, I came to view it as essentially a bourgeois formula; more specifically, a central position of utilitarian thought. I did not want to give up my sense of the commanding importance of economic activity and history. My inquiry in *Culture and Society* had begun from just that sense of a transforming change. But in theory and practice I came to believe that I had to give up, or at least to leave aside, what I knew as the Marxist tradition: to attempt to develop a theory of social totality; to see the study of culture as the study of relations between elements in a whole way of life; to find ways of studying structure, in particular works and periods, which could stay in touch with and illuminate particular art works and forms, but also forms and relations of more general social life; to replace the formula of base and superstructure with the more active idea of a field of mutually if also unevenly determining forces. That was the project of *The Long Revolution*, and it seems to me extraordinary, looking back, that I did not then know the work of Lukács or of Goldmann, which would have been highly relevant to it, and especially as they were working within a more conscious tradition and in less radical an isolation. I did not even then know, or had forgotten, Marx's analysis of the theory of utility, in *The German Ideology*, in which—as I now find often happens in reading and re-reading Marx—what I had felt about the reductionism now embodied in the base-superstructure formula was given a very precise historical and analytic focus.

This being so, it is easy to imagine my feelings when I discovered an active and developed Marxist theory, in the work of Lukács and Goldmann, which was exploring many of the same areas with many of the same concepts, but also with others in a quite different range. The fact that I learned simultaneously that it had been denounced as heretical, that it was a return to Left Hegelianism, left-bourgeois



idealism, and so on, did not, I am afraid, detain me. If you're not in a church you're not worried about heresies; the only real interest is actual theory and practice.

What both Lukács and Goldmann had to say about reification seemed to me the real advance. For here the dominance of economic activity over all other forms of human activity, the dominance of its values over all other values, was given a precise historical explanation: that this dominance, this deformation, was the specific characteristic of capitalist society, and that in modern organized capitalism this dominance—as indeed one can observe—was increasing, so that this reification, this false objectivity, was more thoroughly penetrating every other kind of life and consciousness. The idea of totality was then a critical weapon against this precise deformation; indeed, against capitalism itself. And yet this was not idealism: as assertion of the primacy of other values. On the contrary, just as the deformation could be understood, at its roots, only by economic analysis, so the attempt to overcome and surpass it lay not in isolated witness or in separated activity but in practical work to find, to assert and to establish more human social ends in more human political means.

At the most practical level it was easy to agree. But the whole point of thinking in terms of a totality is the realization that we are part of it; that our own consciousness, our work, our methods, are then critically at stake. And in the particular field of literary analysis there was this obvious difficulty: that most of the work we had to look at was the product of just this epoch of reified consciousness, so that what looked like the theoretical breakthrough might become, quite quickly, the methodological trap. I cannot yet say this finally about Lukács, since I still don't have access to all his work; but in some of it, at least, the major insights of *History and Class-Consciousness*, which he has now partly disavowed, do not get translated into critical practice, and certain cruder operations—essentially still those of base and superstructure—keep reappearing. And I still read Goldmann collaboratively and critically asking the same question, for I am sure the practice of totality is still for any of us, at any time, profoundly and even obviously difficult.

Yet advances have been made, and I want to acknowledge them. In particular Goldmann's concepts of structure, and his distinctions of kinds of consciousness—often based on but developed from Lukács—seem to me very important. And they are important above all for the relation between literary and social studies. At a simpler level, many points of contact between literature and sociology can be worked on: studies of the reading public, for example, where literary analysis of the works being read and sociological analysis of the real formations of the public have hardly yet at all been combined. Or the actual history of writers, as a changing historical group, in any full critical relation to the substance of their work. Or the social history of literary forms, in their full particularity and variety but also in the complex of their relation with other formations. I attempted each of these kinds of analysis in a preliminary way in *The Long Revolution*, but I felt then and have felt ever since a crucial absence of collaborators, and especially of people

who did not say or have to say, as we approached the most difficult central problems, that there, unfortunately, was the limit of their field.

Goldmann, of course, did not accept these limits. He spoke now as sociologist, now as critic, now as cultural historian; but also, in his own intellectual tradition, a philosophy and a sociology were there from the beginning; the patient literary studies began from that fact. Thus, when he spoke of structures, he was consciously applying a term and a method which did not so much cross as underlie the apparently separate disciplines. It is a term and a method of consciousness, and so the relation between literature and sociology is not a relation between, on the one hand, various individual works and on the other hand various empirical facts. The real relation is within a totality of consciousness: a relation that is assumed and then revealed rather than apprehended and then expounded. Much that has to be proved, in our own tradition—and especially the very existence of significant primary relations between literature and society—can there be surpassed, in an active general position. The methodology can be formulated, in general philosophical and sociological terms, before the particular analyses begin. Looking at our work it could be said that we lacked a centre, in any developed philosophy or sociology. Looking at his work—and for all his differences he was representative of that whole other tradition—it could be said that he had a received centre, at the level of reasoning, before the full contact with substance began.

### Structures of Feeling

I think the subsequent argument, if it can be developed, has this necessary tension and even contradiction of method. I will give a central example. I found in my own work that I had to develop the idea of a structure of feeling. This was to indicate certain common characteristics in a group of writers but also of others, in a particular historical situation. I will come back to its precise application later. But then I found Goldmann beginning, very interestingly, from a concept of structure which contained, in itself, a relation between social and literary facts. This relation, he insisted, was not a matter of content, but of mental structures: 'the categories which simultaneously organize the empirical consciousness of a particular social group and the imaginative world created by the writer'. By definition, these structures are not individually but collectively created. Again, in an almost untranslatable term, this was a genetic structuralism, necessarily concerned not only with the analysis of structures but with their historical formation and process: the ways in which they change as well as the ways in which they are constituted. The foundation of this approach is the belief that all human activity is an attempt to make a significant response to a particular objective situation. Who makes this response? According to Goldmann, neither the individual nor any abstract group, but individuals in real and collective social relations. The significant response is a particular view of the world: an organizing view. And it is just this element of organization that is, in literature, the significant social fact. A correspondence of content between a writer and his world is less significant than this correspondence of organization, of structure. A relation of content may be mere reflection, but a relation of

structure, often occurring where there is no apparent relation of content, can show us the organizing principle by which a particular view of the world, and from that the coherence of the social group which maintains it, really operates in consciousness.

To make this more critical, Goldmann, following Lukács, distinguishes between actual consciousness and possible consciousness: the actual, with its rich multiplicity; the possible, with its degree of maximum adequacy and coherence. A social group is ordinarily limited to its actual consciousness, and this will include many kinds of misunderstanding and illusion: elements of false consciousness which will often, of course, be used and reflected in ordinary literature. But there is also a maximum of possible consciousness: that view of the world raised to its highest and most coherent level, limited only by the fact that to go further would mean that the group would have to surpass itself, to change into or be replaced by a new social group.

Most sociology of literature, Goldmann then argues, is concerned with the relatively apparent relations between ordinary literature and actual consciousness: relations which show themselves at the level of content or in conventional elaboration of its common illusions. The new sociology of literature—that of genetic structuralism—will be concerned with the more fundamental relations of possible consciousness for it is at the centre of his case that the greatest literary works are precisely those which realize a world-view at its most coherent and most adequate, its highest possible level. We should not then mainly study peripheral relations: correspondences of content and background; overt social relations between writers and readers. We should study, in the greatest literature, the organizing categories, the essential structures, which give such works their unity, their specific aesthetic character, their strictly literary quality; and which at the same time reveal to us the maximum possible consciousness of the social group—in real terms, the social class—which finally created them, in and through their individual authors.

Now this is, I believe, a powerful argument, and I make my observations on it within that sense. The idea of a world-view, a particular and organized way of seeing the world, is of course familiar to us in our own studies. Indeed I myself had to spend many years getting away from it, in the ordinary form in which I found it presented. The Elizabethan world-picture, I came to believe, was a thing fascinating in itself, but then it was often more of a hindrance than a help in seeing the full substance of Elizabethan drama. Again, I learned the Greek world-picture and was then baffled by Greek drama; the Victorian world-picture and found the English nineteenth-century novel amazing. I think Goldmann's distinction might help us here. He would say that what we were being given was actual consciousness, in a summary form whereas what we found in the literature was the often very different possible consciousness. I have no doubt this is often true, but it is a often the case that we need to reconsider the idea of consciousness itself. What is ordinarily extracted as a world-view is, in practice, a summary of doctrines: more organized, more coherent, than most men of the time would have been able to make them. And then I am no

sure that I can in practice always distinguish this from the kind of evidence Goldmann himself adduces as possible consciousness, when he is engaged in an analysis. Moreover I think either version is often some distance away from the real structures and processes of the literature. I developed my own idea of structures of feeling in response to just this sense of a distance. There were real social and natural relationships, and there were relatively organized, relatively coherent formations of these relationships, in contemporary institutions and beliefs. But what seemed to me to happen, in the greatest literature, was a simultaneous realization of and response to these underlying and formative structures. Indeed, that constituted, for me, the specific literary phenomenon: the dramatization of a process, the making of a fiction, in which the constituting elements, of real social life and beliefs, were simultaneously actualized and in an important way differently experienced, the difference residing in the imaginative act, the imaginative method, the specific and genuinely unprecedented imaginative organization.

We can feel the effect, in all this, of major individual talents, and indeed. I believe that there are discoverable specific reasons, of a social kind, in the immediate histories of writers, why this imaginative alternative was sought. But I am also sure that these creative acts compose, within a historical period, a specific community: a community visible in the structure of feeling and demonstrable, above all, in fundamental changes of form. I have tried to show this in actual cases, in the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century European drama, and in the development and crisis of the nineteenth and twentieth-century English novel. And what seems to me especially important in these changing structures of feeling is that they normally precede those more recognizable changes of formal idea and belief which make up the ordinary history of consciousness, and that while they correspond very closely to a real social history, of men living in actual and changing social relations, they again normally precede the more recognizable changes of formal institution and relationship, which are the more accessible, indeed the more normal, history. This is what I mean by saying that art is one of the primary human activities, and that it can succeed in articulating not just the imposed or constitutive social or intellectual system, but at once this and an experience of it, its lived consequence, in ways very close to many other kinds of active response, in new social activity and in what we know as personal life, but of course often more accessibly, just because it is specifically formed and because when it is made it is in its own way complete, even autonomous, and being the kind of work it is can be transmitted and communicated beyond its original situation and circumstances.

Now if this is so it is easy to see why we must reject those versions of consciousness which relate it directly, or with mere laps and complications, to a determining base. The stress on an active consciousness, made by Lukács and Goldmann, gives us a real way beyond that. And it might be possible to say that the relation I have tried to describe—between formal consciousness and new creative practice—might be better, more precisely, described in the terms of Lukács and Goldmann: actual consciousness and possible consciousness. Indeed I hope it may

be so, but I see one major difficulty. This relation, though subtle, is still in some ways static. Possible consciousness is the objective limit that can be reached by a class before it turns into another class, or is replaced. But I think this leads, rather evidently, to a kind of macro-history: in many ways adequate but in relation to actual literature, with its continuity of change, often too large in its categories to come very close, except at certain significant points when there is a radical and fundamental moment of replacement of one class by another. As I read Goldmann, I find him very conscious of just this difficulty, but then I am not sure that it is accidental that he is much more convincing on Racine and Pascal, at a point of evident crisis between a feudal and a bourgeois world, than he is on the nineteenth and indeed twentieth-century novel, where apparently small but no less significant changes within a bourgeois society have to be given what can be called micro-structural analysis. To say, following Lukács, that the novel is the form in which, in a degraded society, a man tries and fails to surpass an objectively limited society and destiny—the novel, that is to say, of the problematic hero—is at once illuminating and partial; indeed, the evidence presented for it is so extremely selective that we are almost at once on our guard. No English novels are considered at all: the other side of that enclosure of which we are usually, on our side of the channel, so conscious. But while one can offer, willingly, *Great Expectations*, *Born in Exile*, *Jude the Obscure*, and in a more complicated but still relevant way *Middlemarch*, one is left to face a different phenomenon in, for example, *Little Dorrit*. And I think this is not only an argument about particular cases. The most exciting experience for me, in reading Lukács and Goldmann, was the stress on forms. I had become convinced in my own work that the most penetrating analysis would always be of forms, specifically literary forms, where changes of viewpoint, changes of known and knowable relationships, changes of possible and actual resolutions, could be directly demonstrated, as forms of literary organization, and then, just because they involved more than individual solutions, could be reasonably related to a real social history, itself considered analytically in terms of basic relationships and failures and limits of relationship. This is what I attempted, for example, in *Modern Tragedy*, and I then have to say that I have since learned a good deal, theoretically, from the developed sociology of Lukács and Goldmann and others, in just this respect. But much of the necessary analysis of forms seems to me barely to have begun, and this is not only, I think, a matter of time for development.

Perhaps I can put the reason most sharply by saying that form, in Lukács and Goldmann, translates too often as genre or as kind; that we stay, too often, within a received academic and ultimately idealist tradition in which 'epic' and 'drama', 'novel' and 'tragedy', have inherent and permanent properties, from which the analysis begins and to which selected examples are related. I am very willing to agree that certain general correlations of this kind, between a form and a worldview, can be shown. But we have then to face the fact, above all in the last hundred years, that tragedy and the novel, for example, exist, inextricably, within the same culture, and are used by identical or very similar social groups. Or the fact that within modern tragedy, and even more within the novel, there are radically significant changes of form

in which many of the changes in literature and society—changes at the pace of a life, an experience, rather than of a whole historical epoch—can be most directly apprehended. Certainly this is recognized in practice. Goldmann has an interesting contrast between the traditional bourgeois novel and the new novel, of Sarraute or Robbe-Grillet, which he relates to a more completely reified world. Lukács makes similar distinctions, from Balzac through Mann and Kafka to Solzhenitsyn. But the full theoretical issue, of what is meant by form, is still in my view confused, and perhaps especially by the fact that there is this undiscarded ballast of form in a more abstract, more supra-historical sense. Thus even a Goldmann can say, as if he were an ordinary idealist and academic critic, that Sophocles is the only one of the Greek dramatists who can be called tragic 'in the now accepted sense of the word'. The prepotence of inherited categories is then striking and saddening.

### Past Victories, Present Penalties

But then limitations of this kind are organically related to the strengths of this alternative tradition. The habitual and as it were inevitable relation of structure to doctrine, or the application of formal categories, is a characteristic of the developed philosophical position which in most other respects is a source of real strength. That is why it is so important, now, to go beyond the kind of argument which developed in England in the 'thirties, for while particular refutations of this or that reading, this or that method, have an immediate significance, in our whole situation they can hide the fact that behind our local English practicalities is a set of unexamined general ideas, which then suddenly materialize on quite another plane as a sort of social theory: from the critical minority to minority culture and education; or from the richness of past literature to a use of the past against the present, as if the past, and never the future, the sense of a future, were the only source of values. The local victory of the 'thirties was bought at a price we have all since paid: that the more active relations between literary and social studies, and the more fundamental and continuing relations between literature and real societies, including present society, have in effect been pushed away from attention, because in theory and in practice any critical examination of them would disturb, often radically, our existing social relations and the division of interests and specialisms which both expresses and protects them.

I want to end by emphasising two concepts, used by Goldmann, which we ought to try to clarify, theoretically, and which we ought to be trying, collaboratively, to test in practice. The first is the idea of the 'collective subject': obviously a difficult idea, but one of great potential importance. Literary studies in fact use a related idea again and again. We say not only 'the Jacobean dramatists' 'the Romantic poets' and 'the early Victorian novelists', but also we often use these descriptions in a quite singular sense, to indicate a way of looking at the world, a literary method, a particular use of language, and so on. In practice we are often concerned with breaking down these generalizations, and that is right: to know the difference between Jonson and Webster, or Blake and Coleridge, or Dickens and Emily Brontë, is in that real sense

necessary. Yet beyond this we do come to see certain real communities, when we have taken all the individual differences into account. To see only the differences between Blake and Coleridge, but not also the differences between a Romantic poem and a Jacobean play and an early Victorian novel, is to be quite wilfully limited and indeed quite unpractical. And then to be able to give an account of this precise community, a community of form which is also a specific general way of seeing other men and nature, is to approach the problem of social groups in a quite new way: for it is not the reduction of individuals to a group, by some process of averaging; it is a way of seeing a group in and through individual differences: that specificity of individuals, and of their individual creations, which does not so much deny as affirm real social identities, in language, in conventions, in certain characteristic situations, experiences, interpretations, ideas. Indeed the importance for social studies may well be this: that we can find ways of describing significant groups which include, in a fundamental way, those personal realities which will otherwise be relegated to a quite separate area. To have a sociology concerned only with abstract groups, and a literary criticism concerned only with abstract individuals and works, is more than a division of labour; it is a way of avoiding the reality of the interpenetration, in a final sense the unity, of the most individual and the most social forms of actual life.

The problem is always one of method, and this is where the second idea, of the structures of the genesis of consciousness, must be taken very seriously. We are weakest, in social studies, in just this area: in what is called the sociology of knowledge but is always much more than that for it is not only knowledge we are concerned with but all the active processes of learning, imagination, creation, performance. And there is very rich material, within a discipline we already have, for the detailed description of just these processes, in so many individual works. To find ways of extending this, not simply to a background of social history or of the history of ideas, but to other active processes through which social groups form and define themselves, will be very difficult but is now centrally necessary. For relating literary process to the social product, or the social process to the literary product—which is what now we mostly do—in the end breaks down, and people retire though not for long, to their tents. But if in every case we can try, by varying forms of analysis, to go beyond the particular product to its real process—its most active and specific formation—I believe we will find points of connection that will answer, as our separated studies so often do not, to our closest sense of our own living process.

On each of these points—the idea of the collective subject, and the idea of the structures of the genesis of consciousness—Lucien Goldmann's contribution, though unfinished, was significant. Locked as he was in much immediate controversy, he seems often to have been limited to restating his most general positions; yet even here, in ways that in summary I have not been able to indicate, he produced refinements and further definitions, in so complex a field, from which we can all learn. We can dissent, as I often do, from particular formulations and applications, and still recognize the emphasis, the exceptionally valuable emphasis, which he gave, theoretically and practically, to the develop

ment of literary and social studies. And this is more than a professional concern. Beyond the arguments, as listening to him last Spring in Cambridge it was not difficult to see, there is a social crisis and a human crisis in which, in just these ways, we are ourselves involved: for the achievement of clarity and significance, in these most human studies, is directly connected with the struggle for human means and ends in a world that will permit no reserved areas, no safe subjects, no neutral activities. Now and here, in respecting his memory, I take the sense he gave: of a continuing inquiry, a continuing argument, a continuing concern; of a man who made, in our time, a significant response, and with whom we can find, as I think he would have said, a significant community, a way of seeing and being and acting in the world.

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## *Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America*

Debate on the Left in the last decade over the origins and present nature of Latin American societies has focused on the problem of whether they should be seen as feudal or capitalist in character. A complex and lengthy discussion has taken place whose importance is not diminished by the conceptual confusion which has often accompanied it. Its significance, moreover, has not been confined to theory, since different theories have led to different political conclusions. Those who maintain that the Latin American societies were historically constituted as feudal in character and have remained so ever since, wish to emphasize that they are closed, traditional, resistant to change and unintegrated into the market economy. If this is the case, then these societies have still not yet reached a capitalist stage and are, indeed, on the eve of a bourgeois-democratic revolution which will stimulate capitalist development and break with feudal stagnation. Socialists should therefore seek an alliance with the national bourgeoisie, and form a united front with it against the oligarchy and imperialism. The advocates of the opposite thesis claim that Latin

America has been capitalist from its inception, since it was already fully incorporated into the world market in the colonial period. The present backwardness of Latin American societies is precisely the outcome of the *dependent* character of this incorporation and they are in consequence fully capitalist. It is therefore meaningless to postulate a future stage of capitalist development. It is, on the contrary, necessary to fight directly for socialism, in opposition to a bourgeoisie that is completely integrated with imperialism, forming a common front against the masses.

In this article I hope to contribute to a clarification of the basic terms of the polemic. For despite their contradictory appearance, both the positions first cited coincide in one fundamental respect: both designate by 'capitalism' or 'feudalism' phenomena in the sphere of commodity exchange and not in the sphere of production, thus transforming the presence or absence of a link with the market into the decisive criterion for distinguishing between the two forms of society. Such a conception is clearly alien to Marxist theory, which maintains that feudalism and capitalism are, above all, *modes of production*. Andrew Gunder Frank is one of the best-known defenders of the thesis that Latin America is and always has been capitalist.<sup>2</sup> For this reason this present essay will concentrate on his work since it raises the theoretical issues at stake in the debate in their sharpest and clearest form.

### Frank's Theoretical Scheme

Frank's theoretical perspective can be summed up in the following theses:

1. It is false to suppose that economic development occurs through the same succession of stages in each country or that the underdeveloped nations today are at a stage which has been long surpassed by the developed countries. On the contrary, today's developed capitalist countries were never *underdeveloped* in this way, although there was a time when they were *undeveloped*.
2. It is incorrect to consider contemporary underdevelopment as a simple reflection of the economic, political, cultural and social structures of the underdeveloped country itself. On the contrary, underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of relations between the underdeveloped satellite and the present developed countries. These relations were, moreover, an essential part of the structure and evolution of the capitalist system on a world scale. Thus Frank declares: 'To extract the fruits of their labour through monopoly trade—no less than in the times of Cortez and Pizarro in Mexico and Peru, Clive in India, Rhodes in Africa, the 'Open Door' in China—the metropoli destroyed and/or totally transformed the earlier viable social and economic systems of these societies, incorporated them into the metropolitan dominated world-wide capitalist system, and converted them into sources for its own metropolitan capital accumulation and

<sup>1</sup> This article develops some ideas which I have earlier explored in: 'Feudalism and capitalism as categories of historical analysis' (Internal publication of the Institute Torcuato Di Tella), Buenos Aires, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, New York, 1967, and *Latin America: Underdevelopment and Revolution*, New York, 1969.

development. The resulting fate for these conquered, transformed or newly acquired established societies was and remains their decapitalization, structurally generated unproductiveness, ever increasing misery for the masses—in a word, their underdevelopment'.<sup>3</sup>

3. The conventional 'dualist' interpretation of Latin American societies must be rejected. The dualist analysis maintains that underdeveloped societies have a dual structure, each one of whose sectors has a dynamic of its own, largely independent of the other. It concludes that the sector which is under the sway of the capitalist world has become modern and relatively developed, while the other sector is confined to an isolated, feudal or pre-capitalist, subsistence economy. According to Frank, this thesis is quite erroneous; the dual structure is wholly illusory, since the expansion of the capitalist system during the last centuries has effectively and completely penetrated even the most apparently isolated sectors of the underdeveloped world.

4. Metropolitan-satellite relations are not limited to the imperial or international level, since they penetrate and structure economic, social and political life in the dependent Latin American countries, creating sub-metropolises within them to which the interior regions are satellites.

5. From the above propositions, Frank derives the following combination of hypotheses: a) In contrast to the world metropolitan centres which are not satellites, the development of the subordinate metropolises is limited by their satellite status; b) the satellites experienced their greatest economic development, including their classical industrial capitalist growth, only when their links with the metropolitan centres were weakened: as was the case during the Spanish Depression of the 17th century, the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of 19th century, the Depression of the 30's and the two World Wars in the 20th century; by contrast these impulses to development were extinguished whenever the metropolitan centres recovered economically; c) those regions presently most underdeveloped were in the past those most tightly linked to the metropolis; d) the latifundia, whether in the form of plantations or haciendas, were originally typically capitalist commercial enterprises, which themselves created the institutions which enabled them to respond to growing demand in the international and national market, by expanding the aggregate of their capital, land and labour in order to increase their supply of their products; e) latifundia which today are isolated, engaged in subsistence agriculture and apparently semi-feudal, were not always so, but were sectors that underwent a drop in the demand for their output or their productive capacity.

6. Whenever dualism is introduced into a Marxist analysis the implication is that feudalism comprises a conservative sector at one end of the social structure and capitalism a dynamic sector at the other end of it. The strategic consequences are then clear: 'Both in the bourgeois and the supposedly Marxist version of the dual society thesis, one sector of the national economy, which is claimed to have once been feudal, archaic

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<sup>3</sup> *Latin America: Underdevelopment and Revolution*, p. 225.

and underdeveloped as well, took off and became the now relatively developed advanced capitalist sector, while the majority of the population stayed in another sector which supposedly remained as it was in its traditionally archaic, feudal, underdeveloped state. The political strategy usually associated with these factually and theoretically erroneous interpretations of development and underdevelopment is for the bourgeois the desirability of extending modernism to the archaic sector and incorporating it into the world and national market as well; and for the Marxists the desirability of completing the capitalist penetration of the feudal countryside and finishing the bourgeois democratic revolution.<sup>4</sup>

Against this, Frank maintains that Latin America has been capitalist since its very colonization by European powers in the 16th century. His proof is to show by numerous examples that even the most apparently remote and isolated regions of Latin America participated in the general process of commodity exchange and that this change was to the advantage of the dominant imperialist powers. It would only be appropriate to speak of feudalism, according to Frank, if it could be proved that the most economically backward regions of Latin America constituted a closed universe in which a natural economy predominated. Given that, on the contrary, they participated in a process whose motor force was the thirst for riches of the dominant classes and powers, it is only possible to conclude that we are in the presence of a capitalist economic structure. Since the colonial conquest, capitalism has been the basis of Latin American society and the source of its underdevelopment; it is therefore absurd to propose as an alternative to it a dynamic capitalist development. The national bourgeoisie, in those cases where it exists, is so inextricably linked to the imperialist system and to the exploitative metropolitan/satellite relationship, that policies based on alliance with it can only prolong and accentuate underdevelopment. The national-bourgeois phase in the underdeveloped countries must in consequence be eliminated, or at least abbreviated, rather than extended in the name of the existence of a dual society.

It can be seen that Frank's theoretical schema involves three types of assertion: 1. Latin America has had a market economy from the beginning; 2. Latin America has been capitalist from the beginning; 3. the dependent nature of its insertion into the capitalist world market is the cause of its underdevelopment. The three assertions claim to refer to a single process identical *in its essential aspects* from the 16th to the 20th century. We will analyse in turn each of these aspects.

### The Critique of Dualist Conceptions

Frank's criticism of the dualist thesis and his consequent insistence that Latin American societies have always constituted a complex internally structured by, and fully integrated into market economy, are indisputably convincing and correct. Here Frank has developed the cumulative critique of that dualism which received its most celebrated

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<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., p. 225.

formulation in the work of W. A. Lewis.<sup>5</sup> According to Lewis, who expressed a standpoint to be found in numerous partial studies by social scientists of the previous decade, it was necessary to distinguish carefully between the 'capitalist' sector and the 'subsistence' sector of the economy. The latter was presented as completely stagnant and inferior to the former in capital, income and rate of growth. All relations between the two were reduced to the provision by the backward sector of an unlimited supply of labour to the advanced sector. It has been now repeatedly shown that this model underestimates the degree of commercialization which is possible in rural areas, as well as the degree of accumulation in peasant enterprises. It furthermore greatly over-simplifies and distorts the relations which exist between the two sectors of the economy which it presupposes. A more refined knowledge of the inter-connections between the different sectors of the Latin American economies makes the dualist thesis today no longer tenable in its initial formulation.

Moreover, in the concrete case of Latin America, the evidence accumulated over recent years has completely undermined the idea that a pure, natural economy is to be found in the rural areas of the continent. On the contrary, everything appears to suggest that even the most backward peasant regions are bound by fine threads (which have not yet been adequately studied) to the 'dynamic' sector of the national economy and, through it, to the world market. Alejandro Marroquín in an excellent book<sup>6</sup> has made a regional study of this system of relations. Rudolfo Stavenhagen, analyzing the Maya zone of Chiapas and Guatemala Heights, has shown how inter-ethnic relations serve as the basis for class relations based precisely on a widespread incorporation into the market.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in Latin America during the colonial period—so often referred to as a phase of closed economy—a wide circulation of commodities prevailed, the axis of which were the mining regions, while the marginal zones were organized as sources of consumption products. In the South of the Continent, for example, the central nucleus was the consumption area of Upper Peru near the Potosí mines, while Chile was transformed into a wheat producer and the Argentinian interior provided manufactured goods for this central nucleus. It is hard to conceive such regional specialization as a pure, natural economy.

The idea of a society with dual structures has a long tradition in Latin America. It was initially formulated in the 19th century by the liberal elites which integrated their countries into the world market as primary producers, thus accommodating them to an international division of

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<sup>5</sup> W. A. Lewis, 'Economic development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour', *Manchester School*, May 1954, page 139-191, and idem, *Theory of Economic Growth*, London, 1955. A summary of the criticisms that Lewis's model have aroused can be found in Witold Kula, *Theorie Economique du Systeme Feodal*, Paris, 1970, pp. 9-12. Cf. also P. T. Bauer, 'Lewis's Theory of Economic Growth', *American Economic Review*, XLVI, 1956, 4, pp. 632-641.

<sup>6</sup> Alejandro Marroquín, *La Ciudad Mercade (Tlaxcala)*, Mexico, 1957.

<sup>7</sup> Rudolfo Stavenhagen, 'Clases, colonialismo y aculturación. Ensayo sobre un sistema de relaciones inter-étnicas en Mesoamérica', *América Latina*, Año 6, No. 4, Outubro-Dezembre 1963, pp. 63-104.

labour dictated by the metropolitan imperialist countries. The formula 'civilization or barbarism', coined by Sarmiento, became the watchword of this process. It was necessary to use every means to discredit the reaction of those interior regions whose relatively diversified economies disintegrated under the impact of competition from European commodities. For this purpose liberal spokesmen created a mythology according to which everything colonial was identified with stagnation and all things European with progress: in this Manichean image of the historical dialectic, coexistence between both segments of society became impossible.

This ideological tradition was to prove a heavy impediment to any adequate understanding of the processes which have formed Latin American societies and we cannot say that it has been entirely superseded even today. Much ground has still to be covered by social, economic and anthropological investigation in order to reconstruct the hidden channels of commercialization by which apparently closed economic zones were linked with world markets, and the economic surplus collected from the direct producers. Frank is therefore on solid ground when he criticizes theories of dualism and affirms the predominance of the market economy in Latin America. But can we accept his second assertion, that these economies are capitalist?

### The Theoretical Mistakes in Frank's Conception

It is not so easy to answer this question since, although his two books are dedicated to the analysis of capitalism, at no time does Frank explain exactly what he means by it. The closest we get to a conceptual characterization in his work is in such expressions as the following:

'Capitalism's essential internal contradiction between the exploiting and the exploited appears within nations no less than between them...'<sup>8</sup>

But this does not take us very far, since not only capitalism, but feudalism and indeed every class society has been characterized by the contradiction between exploiters and exploited. The problem is to define in each case the specificity of the exploitative relationship in question. This lack of rigour in determining the object of his analysis is, moreover, only one example of the conceptual imprecision from which all Frank's work suffers; an imprecision that is all the more serious in that Marxists should be well aware of the extensive debates that have occurred over the concept of capitalism<sup>9</sup>, a term which can by no means be taken for granted.

If we nevertheless try to infer what Frank understands by capitalism, I think we can conclude that it is approximately the following: a) a system of production for the market, in which b) profit constitutes the

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<sup>8</sup> *Latin America: Underdevelopment and Revolution*, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, London, 1946, Chapter I and R. H. Hilton, 'Capitalism—What's in a Name?', *Past and Present*, Number 1, February 1952, page 32-43.

motive of production, and c) this profit is realized for the benefit of someone other than the direct producer, who is thereby dispossessed of it. On the other hand, by feudalism we should understand a closed of subsistence economy. The existence of a substantial market therefore constitutes the decisive difference between the two.

The first surprising thing is that Frank totally dispenses with *relations of production* in his definitions of capitalism and feudalism. In the light of this, his earlier characterization of the relationship between exploiters and exploited as the fundamental contradiction of capitalism ceases to be so puzzling. For, in effect, Frank's ideological perspective obliges him deliberately to omit the relations of production from his definition of capitalism: only by abstracting them can he arrive at a sufficiently wide notion of capitalism to include the different exploitative situations suffered by the indigenous Peruvian peasantry, the Chilean *inquilinos*, the Ecuadorian *hacipungueros*, the slaves of the West Indian sugar plantations or textile workers in Manchester. For all these direct producers assign their produce to the market; they work for the benefit of others, and they are deprived of the economic surplus which they help to create. In all these cases the fundamental economic contradiction is that which opposes the exploiters to the exploited. The only trouble is that the list is too short, for it could also have included the slave on a Roman *latifundium* or the gleb serf of the European Middle Ages, at least in those cases—the overwhelming majority—where the lord assigned part of the economic surplus extracted from the serf for sale. Therefore, we could conclude that from the neolithic revolution onwards there has never been anything but capitalism.

Of course, Frank is at liberty to abstract a mass of historical features and build a model on this basis. He can even, if he wishes, give the resulting entity the name of capitalism, though we cannot see much point in using, to designate such a variety of relations, words which are normally employed in a different sense. But what is wholly unacceptable is the fact that Frank claims that his conception is the Marxist concept of capitalism. *Because for Marx—as is obvious to anyone who has even a superficial acquaintance with his works—capitalism was a mode of production.* The fundamental economic relationship of capitalism is constituted by the free labourer's sale of his labour-power, whose necessary precondition is the loss by the direct producer of ownership of the means of production. In earlier societies the dominant classes exploited the direct producers—that is, expropriated the economic surplus they created—and even commercialized part of this surplus to the extent of permitting the accumulation of large *capitals* by the commercial class. But there was not *capitalism* in the Marxist sense of the term, since no free labour market existed. The following quotation from *Capital* makes this clear:

‘... otherwise with capital. The historical conditions of its existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. It can spring into life only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence meets in the market with the free labourer selling his labour-power. And this one historical condition comprises a world's history. Capital, therefore, announces from its first appearance

a new epoch in the process of social production. . .'<sup>10</sup>

For Marx, the accumulation of commercial capital is perfectly compatible with the most varied modes of production and does not by any means presuppose the existence of a capitalist mode of production:

'... Hitherto we have considered merchant's capital merely from the standpoint, and within the limits of, the capitalist mode of production! However, not commerce alone, but also merchant's capital, is older than the capitalist mode of production, is, in fact, historically the oldest free state of existence of capital. . .

'... The metamorphosis of commodities, their movement, consists: 1. materially, of the exchange of different commodities for one another, and 2. formally, of the conversion of commodities into money by sale, and of money into commodities by purchase. And the function of merchant's capital resolves itself into these very acts of buying and selling commodities; yet this exchange is not conceived at the outset as a bare exchange of commodities between direct producers. Under slavery, feudalism and vassalage (so far as primitive communities is concerned) it is the slave-owner, the feudal lord, the tribute-collecting state, who are the owners, hence sellers, of the products. The merchant buys and sells for many. Purchases and sales are concentrated in his hands and consequently are no longer bound to the direct requirements of the buyer (as merchant) . . .'<sup>11</sup>

Frank's claim that his conception of capitalism is the Marxist one seems to be based on nothing more than his desire for this to be the case. But before leaving this point let us return again to the texts, because, in a polemic that occurred in Mexico and is reflected in his second volume, he was accused *precisely* of ignoring the mode of production in his definition of capitalism. Frank replied with two quotations from Marx which, he claimed, proved his case. The first quotation is taken from the *History of Economic Doctrines* and affirms:

'... In the second class of colonies—the plantations, which are from the moment of their inceptions, commercial speculation, centres of production for the world market—a regime of capitalist production exists, if only in a formal way, since slavery among the negroes excludes free wage-labour, which is the base on which capitalist production rests. However, those who deal in slave-trading are capitalists. The system of production introduced by them does not originate in slavery, but was introduced into it. In this case the capitalist and the landlord are one person. . .'

According to Frank, this paragraph proves that for Marx it is not the relations of production that define the nature of an economy (at least I deduce as much since it is his answer to Rodolfo Puigros's question as to what 'happened inside colonies such as Brazil and those in the

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<sup>10</sup> *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 170, Moscow, 1959.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 319-321.



Caribbean, that is, where the mode of slave-holding prevailed?). In reality, the quotation proves exactly the reverse of what Frank intends, since what Marx says is that in the plantation economies the dominant mode of production is only formally capitalist. It is formally capitalist because its beneficiaries participate in a world market in which the dominant productive sectors are already capitalist. This enables the landowners in the plantation economy to participate in the general movement of the capitalist system without, however, their mode of production being capitalist. But what is the essential condition for such a situation is its exceptional character. I think this will be very clear if we compare the paragraph quoted by Frank with another passage by Marx, from *Pre-Capitalist Formations*:

'... However, this error is certainly no greater than that of, e.g. all philologists who speak of the existence of *capital* in classical antiquity, and of Roman or Greek capitalists. This is merely another way of saying that in Rome and Greece labour was *free*, an assertion which these gentlemen would hardly make. If we talk of plantation owners in America as capitalists, if they *are* capitalists, this is due to the fact that they exist as anomalies within a world market based upon free labour...'<sup>12</sup>

Did the structural conditions of capitalism exist in 16th-century Europe when, according to Frank, the process of capitalist domination started in Latin America? Could we consider free labour to be the rule then? By no means. Feudal dependence and urban handicrafts remained the basic forms of productive activity. The existence of a powerful commercial class which greatly enlarged its stock of capital through overseas trade did not in the least modify the decisive fact that this capital was accumulated by the absorption of an economic surplus produced through labour relationships very different from those of free labour. In a classic article, Eric Hobsbawm has located the 17th century as the period of general crisis in the European economy which marked the point of transition towards the capitalist system. As far as the expansion of the 15th and 16th centuries is concerned, however, he affirms on the contrary that:

'... Under certain circumstances such trade could, even under feudal conditions, produce a large enough aggregate of profits to give rise to large-scale production; for instance if it catered for exceptionally large organizations such as kingdoms or the church; if the thinly spread demand of an entire continent were concentrated into the hands of businessmen in a few specialized centres such as the Italian and Flemish textile towns; if a large 'lateral extension' of the field of enterprise took place, e.g. by conquest or colonization...'

'... The expansion of the 15th and 16th centuries was essentially, of this sort; and it therefore created its own crisis both within the home market and the overseas market. This crisis the 'feudal businessman'—who were the richest and most powerful just because the best adapted

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<sup>12</sup> Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, London, 1964, p. 118–119.

for making big money in a feudal society—were unable to overcome. Their inadaptability intensified it . . .’<sup>13</sup>

Frank, on the contrary, maintains that European expansion was thoroughly capitalist from the 16th century onwards. He corroborates his assertion with a second quotation from Marx in which the latter declares: ‘The modern history of *capitalism* begins with the creation, in the 16th century, of world trade and a world market . . .’ But this time Frank happens to have transcribed the quotation badly. In the original, Marx, in fact declares, that: ‘The modern history of *capital* dates from the creation in the 16th century of a world-embracing commerce and a world-embracing market . . .’<sup>14</sup>

Given the distinction emphasized above between *capital* and *capitalism*—which permits the coexistence of commercial capital with earlier modes of production—the meaning of this passage is totally different. Marx only says that the enlargement of the world market during the 16th century, brought about by overseas expansion, created the conditions and the global framework in which the *modern* expansion of capital could take place. He takes for granted that anterior forms of capital existed—e.g. in the Middle Ages or in Antiquity. But he by no means speaks of capitalism.

The errors of Frank’s conception can be seen from the fact that he has defined capitalism so loosely that he is unable legitimately to derive any concrete consequences from it about anything. This is, of course, not his own belief: he is confident that he can demonstrate on this ground the irrelevance of the bourgeois-democratic stage in Latin America. Let us consider this demonstration. Frank’s basic assertion is that since the task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is to destroy feudalism, whereas capitalism has always existed in Latin America *ab initio*, the bourgeois democratic revolution disappears from the revolutionary calendar, and is replaced by a direct struggle for socialism.

But Frank has again confused the terms of the problem. For when Marxists speak of a democratic revolution sweeping away the vestiges of feudalism, they understand by feudalism something very different from Frank. For them feudalism does not mean a closed system which market forces have not penetrated, but a general ensemble of extra-economic coercions weighing on the peasantry, absorbing a good part of its economic surplus, and thereby retarding the process of internal differentiation within the rural classes, and therefore the expansion of agrarian capitalism. This is also what the French revolutionaries of 1789 understood by feudalism when they thought they were suppressing it by abolishing the *gabelles* and seigneurial privileges. When Lenin speaks of the growing weight of capitalism in the agrarian structure of Russia in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, his aim is to demonstrate a growing process of class differentiation which was gradually

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<sup>13</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, ‘The Crisis of the 17th Century’, *Past and Present*, No. 5, May 1954, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, ed. cit., p. 146.

producing a class of rich peasants, on the one hand, and an agricultural proletariat, on the other. It would not have occurred to Lenin to base his demonstration of this process on a progressive expansion of production for the market, for such production had *precisely* formed the source of feudalism in Russia several centuries before, when growing opportunities for commercialized wheat production had led the land-owners to increase—indeed to establish—the oppression of serfdom. When the Bolsheviks maintained that the tasks of the Russian Revolution were bourgeois-democratic, they meant that it would eliminate the vestiges of feudalism and open the door to capitalist expansion (in 1905 only Trotsky and Parvus grasped that Russian conditions made possible the inauguration of the direct transition to socialism). Given the inability of the bourgeoisie to carry through its democratic tasks and the numerical weakness of the proletariat, they imagined that the peasantry would have to play a decisive role in the alliance which seized power. For such a strategy, it was crucial that the peasant problem could not be solved by the existing régime, since otherwise Tsarism could have built its own road to capitalism and the revolution would have been postponed *sine die*. Stolypin, the Tsarist Minister who used every device to promote the emergence of a strong class of peasant proprietors to become a bulwark of reaction—somewhat similar to the French peasantry from Napoleon I to de Gaulle—understood this as well as the Bolsheviks. The danger of his policy was clearly perceived by Lenin when he wrote in 1908:

‘... The Stolypin Constitution and the Stolypin agrarian policy mark a new phase in the breakdown of the old, semi-patriarchal and semi-feudal system of Tsarism, a new movement towards its transformation into a middle-class monarchy. . . . If this should continue for very long periods of time . . . it might force us to renounce any agrarian programme at all. It would be empty and stupid democratic phrasemongering to say that the success of such a policy in Russia is ‘impossible’. It is possible! If the Stolypin policy is continued . . . then the agrarian structure of Russia will become completely bourgeois, the stronger peasants will acquire almost all the allotments of land, agriculture become capitalistic, and any ‘solution’ of the agrarian problem—radical or otherwise—will become impossible under capitalism . . .’

This passage limpidly illustrates the conditions in which Lenin considered capitalist development could remove the bourgeois-democratic stage from the agenda of the revolution—exactly the problem with which Frank is grappling. These conditions were the emergence of a strong kulak class at one extreme, and the growth of a rural proletariat on the other. Frank’s denial of the possibility of a bourgeois-democratic revolution in Latin America in effect only amounts to this: he takes a political schema based on an analysis of social relationships respectively designated feudalism and capitalism, he modifies the content of these concepts in mid-stream and then concludes that the political schema is false because it does not correspond to reality. There is no need to insist on the validity of this type of reasoning. (Let me add that I am in no way concerned here to assess the possibility or impossibility of a bourgeois-democratic stage in the various countries of Latin America. I have limited myself to pointing out the impossibility

of formulating any prognosis on this question on the basis of Frank's analysis.)

Furthermore, if we took Frank's definitions of capitalism and feudalism literally, we would have to derive much more from them than Frank claims. In fact if capitalism had already become general in the metropolitan countries by the 16th century—and it is not clear why he stops there when trade and a market economy prevailed from much earlier times—we would have to conclude that Elizabethan England or Renaissance France were ripe for socialism, something I do not think even Frank himself would be prepared to suggest.

If we now confront Frank's affirmation that the socio-economic complexes of Latin America have been capitalist since the Conquest Period (bearing in mind that capitalism and feudalism are modes of production in the Marxist sense of the term) with the currently available empirical evidence, we must conclude that the 'capitalist' thesis is indefensible. In regions with dense indigenous populations—Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, or Guatemala—the direct producers were not despoiled of their ownership of the means of production, while extra-economic coercion to maximize various systems of labour service—in which it is impossible not to see the equivalent of the European *corvée*—was progressively intensified. In the plantations of the West Indies, the economy was based on a mode of production constituted by slave labour, while in the mining areas there developed disguised forms of slavery and other types of forced labour which bore not the slightest resemblance to the formation of a capitalist proletariat. Only in the pampas of Argentina in Uruguay, and in other similar small areas where no indigenous population had previously existed—or where it had been very scarce and rapidly wiped out—did settlement assume capitalist forms from the beginning, which were then accentuated by the massive immigration of the 19th century. But these regions were very remote from the dominant pattern in Latin America, and were more akin to the new settlements in temperate zones like Australia and New Zealand.

Now this pre-capitalist character of the dominant relations of production in Latin America was not only *not* incompatible with production for the world market, but was actually intensified by the expansion of the latter. The feudal regime of the haciendas tended to increase its servile exactions on the peasantry as the growing demands of the world market stimulated maximization of their surplus. Thus, far from expansion of the external market acting as a disintegrating force on feudalism, its effect was rather to accentuate and consolidate it. Let us take an example from Frank's analysis: the evolution of *inquilinaje* (a form of leasehold) in Chile. During the 17th century, the tenant obtained lease of his lands in lieu of a symbolic payment, but this payment began to acquire economic significance and to weigh ever more heavily on the peasant holding as wheat exports to Peru developed following the earthquake of 1688. The 19th century witnessed an aggravation of this process, determined yet again by the increased cereal exports; the labour exacted was often equivalent to that of a permanent worker while the traditional rights of the peasant were simultaneously reduced, especi-

ally his right to *talaje* or pasturage. The money wage he now obtained was lower than that of a day labourer or a journeyman. It would be a mistake to see in this process the emergence of a rural proletariat. If this had been the case the wage should have become the major part of the *inquilinos'* means of subsistence. But all the signs show that, on the contrary, the wage was merely one subordinate element in a subsistence economy based on land tenancy. That is to say, we are faced with a peasant subjected to servile obligations and not with an agricultural wage-earner who completes his income with customary privileges and a piece of land.<sup>15</sup>

This situation—with some variations—was repeated monotonously throughout the Continent. Thus Latin America was not an exception to the process by which heavily settled marginal regions experienced a strengthening of servile relations to increase production for external markets. This is what Eastern Europe progressively experienced from the 16th century onwards, when a substantial growth in the export of primary products to the West became possible. This process was the basis for the re-feudalization of peripheral areas, the 'second servitude' of which Engels speaks. No doubt from the end of the 19th century these conditions were gradually modified in Latin America with the progressive growth of a rural proletariat. It is difficult to say how far peasant proletarianization has reached in different areas today, since we lack sufficient studies of it, but there is no doubt that the process is very far from being concluded, and semi-feudal conditions are still widely characteristic of the Latin American countryside. There is no need whatever to draw dualist perspectives from this position, because we have already seen that the basis of the modern, expanding sector was provided by increased servile exploitation in the backward sector.

We now reach the point where the fundamental misunderstanding in this polemic rests: *to affirm the feudal character of relations of production in the agrarian sector does not necessarily involve maintaining a dualist thesis.* Dualism implies that no connections exist between the 'modern' or 'progressive' sector and the 'closed' or 'traditional' sector. Yet we have argued that, on the contrary, servile exploitation was accentuated and consolidated by the very tendency of entrepreneurs—presumably 'modern' in type—to maximize profits; the apparent lack of communication between the two sectors herewith disappears. In such cases we can affirm that the modernity of one sector is a function of the backwardness of the other, and that therefore no policy is revolutionary which poses as the 'left-wing' of the 'modernizing sector'. It is, on the contrary, correct to confront the system as a whole and to show the indissoluble unity that exists between the maintenance of feudal backwardness at one extreme and the apparent progress of a bourgeois dynamism at the other. I believe that in this way we can effectively demonstrate, in agreement with Frank, that development does generate underdevelopment, except that we base our reasoning on relations of production and not only on those of the market. Frank can, nevertheless, argue that the defenders of the 'feudal' thesis—notoriously the Latin American Communist Parties—have upheld dualist positions. There is undoubtedly much truth in this. For in their interpretation of

the nature of the Latin American economies, the 'feudalists' have employed definitions of feudalism and capitalism similar to Frank's own. It would take too long to explain the reasons for this deformation now, but I believe they can be summed up in this fact: historically, the Latin American left emerged as the left wing of liberalism and its ideology was correspondingly determined by the basic categories of the liberal elites of the 19th century, which we have already outlined. Dualism was an essential element in this system of categories. From this source there derived a constant tendency to identify feudalism with stagnation and closed economy, and capitalism with dynamism and progress. This typical deformation of Marxism then generated its dialectical complement in the diametrically opposite position, that has emerged during the last decade. Since knowledge of historical and present reality made it increasingly evident that the Latin American economies had *always* been market economies, and since the political failure of reformist and allegedly progressive elites in Latin America revealed ever more clearly the intimate interconnections between 'modern' and 'traditional' sectors, a new school concluded that Latin America had always been capitalist. Frank and those who think like him—and there are many—accept the terms of the dilemma as the Latin American cps and 19th-century liberals have posed them, but they place themselves at the opposite extreme. They thus undoubtedly break with dualism—and their point of view is therefore relatively more correct—but by trying to situate the fundamental contradiction in the field of circulation rather than production they can go no more than half-way towards an explanation of why development generates underdevelopment. This becomes very clear once we move on to analyse Frank's third type of assertion, to which we have previously referred: those according to which the origins of underdevelopment lie in the dependent character of Latin American economic insertion into the world market. But before dealing with this point, it is necessary to introduce a greater degree of precision into the analytic categories we will use by distinguishing in particular between modes of production and economic systems.

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<sup>15</sup> In an unpublished note that the author has kindly made available to me, Juan Martínez Alier has pointed out that on the haciendas of the Peruvian Sierra, where the formal elements of extra-economic coercion—such as *corvée* in economic and *gamonalismo* in political relations—have not disappeared, they have nevertheless been transformed to the extent that the peasants' land hunger is now an instrumental end and not an end in itself: land hunger now stems in reality from hunger for employment. He adds: "The aim of a classical jacquerie is to throw off the boss: that is to say, to recover full possession of the land, to get rid of the obligation to pay rent, and as a result, to change the political structure of the distribution of power. The aims of a struggle by peasants with a proletarian mentality will be, on the other hand, to obtain higher pay and greater security, and for these goals the acquisition of land or its take-over by the State can seem appropriate means. If we think . . . that, for the non-wage earning peasant of the Sierra who has gone to work in the haciendas, the principal problem is security of employment, then the possibilities of locating an agrarian structure which permits later socialist development are greater than if we think that the possession of the land is an end in itself for the peasants."

Martínez Alier here points out one of the ways in which a process of proletarianisation can effectively start. Nevertheless, the operation of this process presupposes the concurrence of two conditions: 1) that there is a progressive loss of ownership of the means of production; 2) that another optional system of employment, subject to cyclical fluctuations, is permanently available. Otherwise we should have to maintain that where the demand for service labour is lower than the supply, coercion is

## Modes of Production and Economic Systems<sup>16</sup>

We understand by 'mode of production' an integrated complex of social productive forces and relations linked to a determinate type of ownership of the means of production.<sup>17</sup> From among the ensemble of relations of production, we consider those linked to the ownership of the means of production to be the essential relations, since they determine the forms of canalization of the economic surplus and the effective degree of the division of labour, the basis in turn of the specific capacity of the productive forces for expansion. Their own level and rhythm of growth depends in turn on the destination of the economic surplus. We therefore designate as a mode of production the logical and mutually co-ordinated articulation of: 1. a determinate type of ownership of the means of production; 2. a determinate form of appropriation of the economic surplus; 3. a determinate degree of development of the division of labour; 4. a determinate level of development of the productive forces. This is not merely a descriptive enumeration of isolated 'factors', but a totality defined by its mutual interconnections. Within this totality, property in the means of production constitutes the decisive element.

An 'economic system', on the other hand, designates the mutual relations between the different sectors of the economy, or between different productive units, whether on a regional, national or world scale. When, in Volume One of *Capital*, Marx analysed the process of production of surplus value and the accumulation of capital, he described the *capitalist mode of production*. On the other hand, when he analyses the interchange between Department One and Department Two and introduces problems such as rent or the origin of commercial profit, he is describing an 'economic system'. An economic system can include, as constitutive elements, different modes of production—provided always that we define it as a whole, that is, by proceeding from the element or law of motion that establishes the unity of its different manifestations.

The feudal mode of production is one in which the productive process operates according to the following pattern: 1. the economic surplus is produced by a labour force subject to extra-economic compulsion; 2. the economic surplus is privately appropriated by someone other than the direct producer; 3. property in the means of production remains in the hands of the direct producer. In the capitalist mode of

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economic and not extra-economic, and that therefore the serf is a proletarian and not a peasant. But this situation was a frequent occurrence during the European Middle Ages in periods of rising population, which enabled the lords to intensify the services due to them. On the other hand, periods of declining population—such as that which followed the Black Death in the 14th century—enabled the peasants to improve their negotiating position vis à vis the lord. The situation described by Martinetz Allier only exists when land has become simply one possible field of employment alongside others. In all other cases, we cannot speak of a dissociation in the peasant's consciousness between the land as a source of employment and the land as an end in itself.

<sup>16</sup> What follows is a resume of arguments advanced in my study mentioned above (See footnote 1).

<sup>17</sup> Oscar Lange, *Economia Politica*, Roma, 1962.

production, the economic surplus is also subject to private appropriation, but as distinct from feudalism, ownership of the means of production is severed from ownership of labour-power; it is that permits the transformation of labour-power into a commodity, and with this the birth of the wage-relation. I believe it is possible within this theoretical framework to situate the problem of dependence at the level of relations of production.

### The Stages of Dependence

Frank refers throughout his works to the relation of dependence between satellite and metropolis; indeed this is the axis along which his theoretical schema is organized. Nevertheless, throughout his writings there is no attempt whatever to define the nature of this relationship of dependence—that is, to situate the specific economic contradictions on which the relationship of dependence hinges. Frank describes for us a situation in which the underdeveloped country is totally integrated into the expansive processes of the great metropolitan countries; he then shows us *how* the advanced countries have exploited the peripheral countries; what he at no time explains is *why* certain nations needed the underdevelopment of other nations for their own process of expansion. The most he provides on this point is a vague general reference to Paul Baran's *The Political Economy of Growth*. But as we know, Baran deals with a very specific situation of underdevelopment, which we cannot extrapolate into the past and which is becoming constantly less applicable today to contemporary Latin America. Or does Frank believe that Baran's model is applicable to such countries as Argentina, Brazil or Mexico—the three most important areas of investment in the continent, after Venezuela, for North American imperialism?

It is not very difficult to find the reasons for this notable gap in Frank's theoretical schema. For his notion of capitalism is so wide that, given the level of abstraction on which he moves, he cannot define any contradictions that are specific to it. If Cortes, Pizarro, Clive and Cecil Rhodes are all one and the same, there is no way of tracing the nature and origins of economic dependence in relation of production. If, on the other hand, we cease to regard capitalism as a *Donus ex Machina* whose omnipresence frees us from all explanatory problems, and try instead to trace the origins of dependence in concrete modes to production, the first step we must take is to renounce all talk of a single unique contradiction. Because relationships of dependence have always existed on the margins of the existence of capitalism.

During the Middle Ages, for example, advances in historiographic studies have made it clear that an unequal exchange existed between Western Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Ashtor's works on prices in medieval Syria, in particular, show that the latter were stationary while prices in Western Europe were oscillating with a long-term tendency to rise. This disjuncture provided a channel of absorption of economic surplus for the Western bourgeoisie from their Eastern periphery. Since economic dependence means the constant absorption by one region of the economic surplus of another region,



we must categorise medieval trade between East and West as a relation of dependence, because the disparity in price levels—the basis of any commercial activity—was always to the advantage of one against the other. Yet this activity, which greatly stimulated the accumulation of commercial capital in the great European cities, by no means implied the generalisation of wage relationships in the sphere of production. On the contrary, it corresponded to a feudal expansion, in which servile ties were very often reinforced to maximise the surplus. Was not the European expansion of the mercantilist epoch perhaps an extension of this process on a world scale? Through its monopoly positions, metropolitan Europe fixed the price of commodities in its overseas empires—with the aim of securing a permanent disparity in its favour—while, by means of extra-economic coercion, it exploited labour-power in the mines and plantation systems. Romano asks: 'Can the problem of disparity of prices, observed between different regions of the Near East, find an explanation, an attempted explanation, in the light of the example of Spanish America? Might not these zones of lower price levels be the fate of sub-colonies, such as are so often found in the Spanish Empire in America: for example, Chile and Peru were both colonies of Spain, yet the first was also the sub-colony of the second? . . .'<sup>18</sup> It is thus possible to see how the development of the dominant economic structure of the metropolitan countries in the mercantilist epoch could generate underdevelopment: reducing the economic surplus of the peripheral countries and fixing their relations of production in an archaic mould of extra-economic coercion, which retarded any process of social differentiation and diminished the size of their internal markets.

This type of dependent relationship is nevertheless very different from that which was to predominate in the specifically capitalist epoch of European expansion. For this is where the central problem arises. Because if we want to show that in this epoch too, development generates underdevelopment, what we have to prove is that the maintenance of pre-capitalist relations of production in the peripheral areas is an inherent condition of the process of accumulation in the central countries. At this point we enter territory where unfortunately empirical investigation is too inadequate to permit our reaching any definitive conclusion<sup>19</sup>; nevertheless I believe we can legitimately formulate a theoretical model which establishes the variables at play and the form of their articulation to which the available evidence points. This theoretical model can be summarized in the following terms. The process of capital accumulation—which is the fundamental motor force of the ensemble of the capitalist system—depends on the rate of profit. Now the rate of profit is in its turn determined by the rate of surplus-value and the organic composition of capital. A rise in the organic composition of capital is a condition for capitalist expansion, since technological progress is what permits the reconstitution of the

<sup>18</sup> Ruggiero Romano, 'Les prix au Moyen Âge: dans le Proche Orient et dans l'Occident chrétien', *Annales E.S.C.*, juillet-août 1963, pp. 699–702.

<sup>19</sup> See, however, the information contained in the essays by Cristian Palloix, 'Imperialisme et mode de production capitaliste' in *L'Homme et la Société*, No. 12, avril-juin 1969, pp. 175–194, and Samir Amin, 'Le commerce international et le flux internationaux de capitaux', *ibid.*, No. 15, janvier-mars 1970, pp. 77–102.

reserve army of labour and the maintenance of a low level of wages. But unless a rise in the organic composition of capital is linked to a more than proportional increase in the rate of surplus value, it will necessarily produce a decline in the rate of profit. This tendency is partially compensated by capital movements from industries with a high organic composition to those with a low organic composition: from this there emerges an average rate of profit which is always higher in value terms than the corresponding rate of profit in the technologically more advanced industries. Nevertheless, since a growing augmentation in the organic composition of the total capital is inherent in capitalist expansion, in the long term there can only be a permanent tendency for the rate of profit to decline. These are, of course, the terms of the famous law formulated by Marx.

It will be seen that in this schema—which describes precisely enough the dominant tendencies at work in a free competitive capitalism—what seems to be the key to a sustained process of accumulation is the expansion, in any sector of the system, of productive units in which either low technology or super-exploitation of labour makes it possible to counteract the depressive effect on the rate of profit of the increasing organic composition of capital in the dynamic or advanced industries. Now the enterprises of the peripheral areas are in an ideal position to play this role. Let us take the example of plantations or haciendas. In these the organic composition of capital is low<sup>20</sup>—as is always the case in the production of primary products as against industrial output; the labour force is in general subjected to the forms of extra-economic coercion characteristic of the feudal or slave modes of production; finally, to the extent that free labour exists, it is generally superabundant and therefore cheap<sup>21</sup>. If it could then be proved that investment in

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<sup>20</sup> Under feudalism the ownership of the means of production by the direct producer is an obstacle to technical progress. Under a slave mode of production the tendency of the slave to destroy the machine creates barriers to investment of constant capital. See Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 196–197, where several examples are cited, and Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio*, La Habana, 1964.

<sup>21</sup> The importance of this fact was already noted by Marx, who nevertheless did not analyse its relative weight in the formation of average rate of profit: 'Another question—really beyond the scope of our analysis because of its special nature—is this: Is the general rate of profit raised by the higher rate of profit produced by capital invested in foreign, and particularly colonial, trade?

Capital invested in foreign trade can yield a higher rate of profit, because, in the first place, there is competition with commodities produced in other countries with inferior production facilities, so that the more advanced country sells its goods cheaper than the competing countries. In so far as the labour of the more advanced country is here realised as labour of a higher specific weight, the rate of profit rises, because labour which has not been paid as being of a higher quality is sold as such. The same may obtain in relation to the country to which commodities are exported and to that from which commodities are imported: namely, the latter may offer more materialised labour *in kind* than it receives and yet thereby receive commodities cheaper than it could produce them. Just as a manufacturer who employs a new invention before it becomes generally used, undersells his competitors and yet sells his commodity above its individual value, that is, realises the specifically higher productiveness of the labour he employs as surplus labour. He thus secures a surplus profit. As concerns capital invested in colonies, etc., on the other hand, they may yield higher rates of profit for the simple reason that the rate of profit is higher there due to backward development, and likewise the exploitation of labour, because of the use of slaves, coolies, etc'. *Capital*, Vol. III, pp. 232–233.

these sectors has played an important role in determining the rate of profit, it would follow that the expansion of industrial capitalism in the metropolitan countries necessarily depended on the maintenance of pre-capitalist modes of production in the peripheral areas. However it is at this point that the evidence so far available becomes suggestive, but not conclusive. If this thesis were established it would be possible by starting strictly from relations of production, to show that development generates underdevelopment and to refute, from a Marxist perspective, the traditional dualist schema.

Returning, then, to our previous terminology, we can affirm that the world capitalist system—which finds its regulating principle in the average rate of profit produced by the interaction between different enterprises—includes, *at the level of its definition*, various modes of production. For if our previous line of argument is correct, the growth of the system depends on the accumulation of capital, the rhythm of this accumulation depends on the average rate of profit, and the level of this rate depends in its turn on the consolidation and expansion of pre-capitalist relationships in the peripheral areas. The great flaw in pure underconsumptionist theories is that they interpret external expansion as a response to the pressure for markets; they thereby overlook the decisive fact that colonial exploitation, by helping to raise the average rate of profit, ensures the system's capacity for expansion not only at the moment of *realisation* but also at the moment of *investment*.

This is as far as we can go by purely theoretical argument. The above assertions are subject to two series of empirical verifications. It will be necessary to demonstrate: 1) that during the 19th century the growth in the organic composition of capital was in fact more rapid than the growth in the productivity of labour; 2) that the capital invested in peripheral countries played an important role in the maintenance of an adequate rate of profit in the metropolitan countries. Only empirical investigation can prove that both these conditions existed in reality.

On the other hand, if these conditions did exist in the past, there is no doubt that they no longer apply today<sup>22</sup>. The enormous increase in the productivity of labour in the present stage of monopoly capitalism—related to technological changes—has tended to make pre-capitalist super-exploitation of labour power anti-economic, and to concentrate investment in the central countries. At the same time—Latin America is a clear example of this—imperialist investment has tended to shift from its traditional patterns into the production of either strategic materials—the typical case is oil—or into industrial output. The nature of the relationship between metropolis and satellite—to use Frank's terminology—is no less one of dependence, but it operates in each case as a very distinct type of dependence. It seems to me more useful to underline these differences and discontinuities than to attempt to show the continuity and identity of the process, from Hernan Cortes to General Motors.

Returning, then, to the debate over 'feudalism vs. capitalism', I think it should by now be clear that its protagonists have constantly confused the two concepts of the *capitalist mode of production* and *participa-*

tion in a world capitalist economic system. I consider that the distinction between these concepts is not a purely academic matter since, if the foregoing argument is correct, it enables us to clarify important aspects of the ensemble of relationships between metropolis and satellite. On the other hand, to equate the two can only perpetuate the misunderstanding that haunts Frank's contribution to the debate. The final comment on the traditional form of the polemic can perhaps best be left to Marx himself. In a celebrated reflection on the economists of his day he wrote a passage that has still not lost its relevance:

"The first theoretical treatment of the modern mode of production—the mercantile system—proceeded necessarily from the superficial phenomena of the circulation process as individualised in the movements of merchant capital, and therefore grasped only the appearance of matters. Partly because merchant's capital is the first free state of existence of capital in general. And partly because of the overwhelming influence which it exerted during the first revolutionising period of feudal production—the genesis of modern production. The real science of modern economy only begins when the theoretical analysis passes from the process of circulation to the process of production. . ."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See for example, the discussion initiated by Charles Bettelheim in his preface to the French edition of Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital* (Paris, 1968) and by Pierre Jalée, *L'Imperialisme en 1970* (Paris 1970).

<sup>24</sup> *Capital*, Vol III, p 331.

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## Washington v. Tokyo: Wall Street v. Marunouchi

In November last year the us House of Representatives passed a protectionist trade bill, by 215 to 165 votes, which was condemned inside and outside the USA as the worst of its kind since the Smoot-Hawley Bill of 1930. The bill was blocked in the Senate by the preadjournment logjam. In January this year Wilbur Mills, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, announced he would reintroduce the bill during the current session of Congress.

At the same time, the long-drawn-out talks between the us and Japan on Japanese textile exports to the us have broken down, at least publicly, once again, after already causing intense irritation in both countries. Since America and Japan are the two largest capitalist economies in the world, this conflict—comparable only to that at the time of the Great Depression—demands the closest scrutiny.

First, the contents of the Trade Bill. It imposed quotas on imports into the us of textiles and shoes; it froze flexible oil quotas into law; it opened up the possibility of quotas on 125 (estimated) other products, including motor cars, tv sets and sewing machines, under the 'trigger mechanism'<sup>1</sup>; the bill also contained a clause allowing us corporations to channel their export sales through a special subsidiary, Domestic International Sales Corporation (DISC)—and profits from such sales

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<sup>1</sup> This obliges the President to introduce quotas, or raise tariffs, on any foreign product which captures 15 per cent of the us. market—provided the American industry in question can prove injury and that the us Tariff Commission recommend action.

would not be subject to income tax until (and if) they were returned to the parent company.<sup>2</sup>

Second, how did the bill coalesce? In November 1969 three small cases were raised under a section of the 1962 Trade Expansion Act. For the first time, the US Tariff Commission found—on tenuous grounds—that increasing imports resulting ‘in major part’ from concessions granted under trade agreements (between 20 and 25 years previously) were ‘a major factor’ in the loss of jobs (some 800) in all three cases. Little attention was paid to this at the time, but it coincided with the beginning of long and difficult talks between the US and the main East Asian textile-producing areas (Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong); from the US point of view, these talks were designed to restrict foreign textile imports into the US.

Moreover, since the Kennedy Round (1964–67), there has been no thorough discussion among the major capitalist states of their monetary, financial and commercial relationships.<sup>3</sup> Enormous changes have taken place in these last four years. Of particular relevance here: first, Japan’s economic growth at sustained speed;<sup>4</sup> second, the increased harmonization of EEC economic policy (including an agreement to standardize economic policy towards Japan); third, the recession in the United States, with its attendant unemployment (creating the psychological climate for complaints about jobs being jeopardized) and inflation (allowing business to complain that ‘free’ competition is now ‘unfair’).

But the trade bill and Nixon’s stance in the negotiations with Japan only make sense in the light of Nixon’s commitment to the Southern textile interests to protect their inefficient (though exploitative) businesses.<sup>5</sup> No one even pretends this is not the case: ‘The basic reason why the Nixon Administration decided to support legislation for unilateral textile quotas is political. President Nixon is anxious to increase his own and his party’s standing in the southern states’ (Anthony Thomas, *The Times*, June 29th, 1970); ‘Mr Nixon owes his 1968 nomination to South Carolina’s Sen. Strom Thurmond, and he regards that debt as a near-sacred obligation. (*Newswatch*, March 22nd, 1971).

Furthermore, the vital factor—which has only recently become clear—is that Nixon inserted a secret condition into the 1969 agreement to hand Okinawa back to Japan. At the time this agreement was announced, it was widely understood (although there was some querying) that Okinawa would ‘revert’ to Japan in 1972. Now the

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<sup>2</sup> ‘The European Economic Community is even more agitated about DISC than the United States critics. An EEC official said in Brussels that even if important quotas were eliminated from the Trade Bill, the DISC provision alone would be enough to cause ‘a fiscal world war’. (*The Times*, December 4th, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> On January 1st, 1971 *The Times* reported that sources close to the Japanese government were suggesting a new series of negotiations, ‘to be known as the Japan Round’ to promote a further international round of tariff cuts, to take effect from the end of the current Kennedy Round cuts in 1972.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Tresize, US Assistant Economic Secretary, and formerly economic minister at the US Embassy in Tokyo, estimates Japan’s trading surplus in 1975 at \$12,000m.

<sup>5</sup> The history of US-Japan textile relations, and the politics of Southern textile interests are exhaustively dealt with by Warren S. Hunsberger, *Japan and the United States in World Trade*, New York, 1964.

Nixon Administration has announced (late March 1971) that reversion will have to take the form of a formal treaty, thus requiring a two-thirds majority in the Senate—a majority it could not get without Southern protectionist support. In other words, Okinawa will not be handed back unless Japan agrees to Nixon's terms on the textile issue.

The actual trade bill grew out of the American-Japanese talks. These talks were originally conducted by Nixon's Secretary of Commerce, Stans, an arrogant right-winger who infuriated the Japanese, and many Americans: as far back as May last year, *Times* openly called for his removal: 'Nixon could take a useful step by naming a new negotiator. Stans has given every appearance of making the textile industry's cause his own and has apparently given up trying to reach a compromise' (May 11th, 1970). Stans was eventually fired, though not before he had done considerable damage, and replaced by White House aide, Peter Flanigan (who has been in charge of patronage for the Nixon régime).

It was while Stans was 'negotiating' with the Japanese that he asked Wilbur Mills to get working on a bill setting textile import quotas—apparently hoping to use the bill as a threat to scare the Japanese into accepting American terms. Mills opened hearings in May 1970 and was deluged by protectionist demands. In July the Ways and Means Committee went into secret session and the real log rolling began. A Massachusetts Democrat from a shoe-making constituency pledged support for textile quotas if the bill would also cover shoes. A Wisconsin Republican then introduced the 'trigger mechanism' to protect Wisconsin dairy farmers, threatened by imports of foreign cheese. The provision freezing the oil-quota system was brought in to win the backing of the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Russell Long of Louisiana (a major oil-producing state). By the time the bill was assembled, it covered 125 items, which come into the us from 36 different countries, and involve to one degree or another every state in the union (there is even a special provision on glycine imports, to protect one factory in Tennessee, employing 26 people).

It is not hard to see why individual Congressmen, in a climate of recession, should promote protectionist measures. But it is worth looking closer at the textile issue, which sparked the whole thing off. Between 1961 and 1969 employment in the us textile industry rose from 893,000 to 989,000. The profits of the industry soared from 920m. dollars in 1961 to 2,198m. in 1969; the rate of profit on stockholders' equity rose from 5.9 per cent to 7.9 per cent in corporations making textile mill products (1960-69), and from 7.7 per cent to 11.9 per cent in corporations manufacturing apparel and finished products (1960-69).

In 1969 the us trade deficit with Japan amounted to \$1.5 billion—of which textiles accounted for 504m. But these Japanese imports accounted for only about 2 per cent of total us textile consumption (and altogether all textile imports come to only some 4.2 per cent of all us textile consumption). The us textile industry has increased both its profits and its sales: up from \$13.8 billion in 1960 to 21.3 billion in 1969, although domestic producers' sales have not grown as fast as the market (mainly due to inefficiency). 'In effect, quotas on imports would

allow manufacturers to increase their profits at the expense of the consumer' (*Times*, May 11th, 1970).<sup>6</sup>

It is true that Japanese textile exports to the us have been growing quite fast—about 10 per cent a year up to 1970<sup>7</sup>—but not nearly as fast as Japanese manufactured goods, which have been growing at a rate of 25 per cent a year. The Japanese therefore said, not unreasonably, that they would consider voluntary restrictions on sales to the us where specific American sectors could show good cause. In the words of *The Times* (March 15th, 1971), 'No such proof has been forthcoming.' Unable to show 'good cause', the Americans simply demanded a blanket, enforced limit. Stans's main argument was that the us could not compete with 'low-wage' foreign countries. In testimony before Mills's Committee in June 1970, he claimed that America was 'Uncle Sucker for the rest of the world'. us textile workers, according to him, were earning average pay of \$2.38 per hour, as compared with 57 cents in Japan, and 13 cents an hour for men and 7 cents for women in South Korea (incidentally, thus a lower total wage than us statistics usually claim for the rOK). But, of course, this argument can be used about virtually every product manufactured in the us. *The Times* correspondent writes: 'Most of the blame for the deterioration in trade relations must rest with President Nixon and the Commerce Department in deciding to support quotas for the wrong reasons. Textiles is one of the few industries in which an underdeveloped country can successfully compete with the developed countries, partly because of the high labour content and partly because of the easily installed and serviced machinery involved' (*The Times*, October 30th, 1969). Overall therefore, the situation on textiles can be resumed as follows: 1. The us textile industry *grew* during the decade of the 1960's, and profits rose well out of proportion to either sales or employment. 2. The total percentage of textile consumption in the us accounted for by imports (4.4.2 per cent) is well below that for many other products (e.g. shoes—about 25 per cent). 3. Japanese textile exports to the us have been growing at less than half the speed of Japanese exports of manufactured goods to the us.

The Japanese seem to have made quite an open-handed attempt to come to reasonable terms with the Americans on the textile issue. Two general points need to be made about Japan's exports: first, the absolute level is comparatively low—about 9.5 per cent of GNP in 1969 (cf. about 14 per cent for the UK and 16 per cent average for the EEC countries); Japan's exports have been growing fast, but by 1969 they accounted for only 6.6 per cent of world exports, hardly

<sup>6</sup> 'One voice was never heard on Capitol Hill—the voice of the us consumer. The consumer will pay the bill if the protectionist measure passes, and the price will be outrageous . . . by 1975 consumers will be paying \$3.7 billion a year extra for clothing and shoes alone. Reasons: Americans will not be able to get low-priced imports as easily as they now do, and prices of us-made goods will rise faster because of less competition from abroad. The costs . . . will be borne disproportionately by the poor, who must spend a larger slice of their income on shoes and clothing than the well-to-do. These costs would be multiplied if imports of many other foreign products were limited under the trigger mechanism.' (*Time*, November 23rd, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Textile imports into the us from the Far East rose by 75 per cent in the first two months of 1971: one-third of these imports were estimated to be from Japan.



commensurate with Japan's share of world output; second, Japan still exports an incomparably higher percentage of her products (about 45 per cent) to the under-developed countries than any other industrialized country. In Japan's terms, the process of export growth which is now taking place is simply *an approach to normalcy*. Nonetheless, it was the general opinion of commentators that the Japanese leant over backwards with Washington: 'So far as one can tell through the wall of secrecy, the concessions have been made by the Japanese. First they dropped their demand that an injury test be required, for a product to be subjected to controls. . . [They] also conceded ground on their other main point that controls should not apply across the board (on textiles), but should be confined to products where imports are important . . . The American negotiators appear to be making few concessions. And Osaka's textile-makers feel—with justification—that they are being made scapegoats for the troubles of the us textile industry' (Malcolm Crawford, *Sunday Times*, November 29th, 1970). For the Japanese, of course, textiles are not that important an export; complex manufactured goods such as tv sets and turbines are increasingly taking over in importance; moreover, Japan has shown unequalled speed in switching her exports from one market to another—if a trade bill goes through Congress, Japan will presumably move in on other markets now held by relatively uncompetitive European sellers.<sup>8</sup>

If anything, Japanese-American relations have degenerated in 1971. In January, Mills announced he would re-introduce the trade bill, without (as he had previously said) waiting for the outcome of the us-Japan talks. At the time, this was widely interpreted as yet another shot in the psychological war on the Japanese. Two days prior to the Mills speech (delivered to a Chamber of Commerce group in Charlotte, NC, the heart of the textile business), Nixon had announced the appointment of a Chicago businessman, Peter Peterson (from Bell and Howell, the photographic equipment firm) to head a new council to co-ordinate American international economic policy—an institution which, amazingly, did not previously exist. At the same time, the administration decided to step up its anti-Japan campaign on more rational grounds. The Treasury (particularly Assistant Secretary Eugene Rossides) started to move against some key Japanese imports: the biggest anti-dumping action ever brought by the Treasury was initiated against imports of tv sets and electronic parts from Japan (Japanese tv sets netted \$264m. in 1969 in the us)—this has been done by re-activating the old 1921 Anti-dumping Act, which has been dusted off for the purpose. And, although Washington's motives are obvious, it should be noted that Japanese manufacturers were exploiting the

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<sup>8</sup> Most European countries were initially extremely hostile to the us position, and both the EEC and the UK sent delegations to Washington to dispute the administration's stand. However, in March this year, after a visit to Washington, the Confederation of British Industry announced it was trying to convene a meeting of European business leaders 'to unite European business opinion behind the moves in the United States at forcing Japan to liberalize her trading policies'; these moves could, in *The Times*'s words (March 11th, 1971) 'in the long term, involve the car in leading what may turn out to be a highly damaging and controversial trade war with Japan; this warning was followed up with a stinging editorial against the move four days later (*The Times*, March 15th, 1971). The CBI's role as leading lackey of the us seems to have gone almost unnoticed.

domestic (Japanese) market by selling TVs there at a relatively higher price than in US. Rossides' move has fuelled a major consumers' protest in Japan, with beneficial effect. In February this year three leading American steel companies filed charges with the Treasury alleging Japanese dumping of stainless sheet-steel (in 1970 Japan supplied more than 26 per cent of all stainless sheet-steel used in the USA). In early March Henry Ford hinted that Japan was 'dumping' motor cars in the American market. All this sudden action on the 'dumping' front has to be seen as a complementary, and more rational, anti-Japanese offensive, to try to force Tokyo into a more submissive attitude.

Given this increased American pressure, Japan announced in late February this year that its textile industry was offering a new programme based on voluntary restraint: under this, exports of Japanese textiles would be limited to an increase of 5 per cent for the first year, and 6 per cent for the following two years, on the basis of one overall quota (i.e. no individual restrictions on groups of products or specific items). The Japanese government facilitated this non-governmental initiative by allotting a large sum of money (some £22.5m.) for immediate short-term relief for small and medium business affected by the programme. In early March Wilbur Mills announced he supported the Japanese voluntary restrictions proposal. It subsequently emerged that he had stage-managed the secret negotiations which produced the offer. Mills's reasoning was: first, any move to try to get a textile quota bill through Congress would inevitably produce a 'Christmas tree' bill like in 1970, and trigger off both protectionism and dangerous international vibrations; second, since any deal to restrict Japanese exports would be technically illegal, it might as well be as unofficial as possible.

On March 11th Nixon came out with a virulent blast against the plan. He lambasted the Japanese government for endorsing the 'unorthodox action' involved in the proposal (i.e. a non-governmental offer); and he castigated Mills for allegedly working behind his back. In fact, Nixon appears to have worried that if the agreement between Mills and the Japanese industry went through, he himself (Nixon) would fail to get any political credit—although on realistic economic grounds the deal was about the best that could be expected.

A few days later the White House informed Japan that the US might invoke the national security clause of the Reciprocal Trade Act as a way to limit the inflow of man-made fibre textile imports, as well as possible recourse to the general escape clause provisions of the GATT. This was, however, only an intermediate warning. Within the administration, Nixon was fighting off a united front of advice that he should accept the offer: Rogers, Kissinger, McCracken (chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers) and Shultz (director of the Office of Management and the Budget and overlord of the domestic economic scene) all backed acceptance. But the commitment to his Southern backers took priority, and he let it be known, through Rogers, that the Okinawa issue was on the line over the textile question. 'This is pure blackmail' *Newweek* quoted a spokesman for Japanese interest in Washington (March 29th, 1971).

The basic underlying cause of the trade dispute, which has been allowed to become more acrimonious than any similar squabble since the Second World War, is that the us has never worked out its own relationship with post-1945 Japan, which is part subordinate, part ally, part competitor, part partner. Events have come to a head simultaneously: on the one hand, the us is now bargaining with its last major counter, possession of Okinawa; on the other hand, Japan is on the verge of completing its 'liberalization' programme (scheduled for completion this autumn). Nixon is trying to extract the maximum price for his last concession, and is prepared to engage in some low practice towards this end.

The trouble from Nixon's point of view is that there is no 'good' solution. If a protectionist bill goes through, Nixon will make two powerful groups of enemies: the American masses (ultimately—through higher prices) and the régimes of the other leading capitalist states. Such a bill would also slow world trade down greatly—and this would be extremely serious for the administration since, although in the short run it would hit America's trading partners harder than the us, in the long run it would be bound to prevent any possibility of the American economy picking up out of the current recession.

It is inconceivable that any American administration would really risk alienating its main ally in Asia; therefore, just as the tie-up between the textile issue and Okinawa only surfaced when the blackmail had advanced quite a way, so it is reasonable to assume that wider economic issues are also involved in the whole struggle. Of these undoubtedly the crucial one is the issue of American investment in Japan.

By the end of this year, virtually the entire economy will be open to foreign investment, up to a figure of not more than 50 per cent foreign holding in any one company. American capital is extremely interested in breaking into the Japanese market—the fastest-growing one in the world, and particularly attractive since the structure imposed on the economy so far has 'artificially' retarded the growth of consumer spending (Japan, with the third highest gnp in the world ranks only 16th in per capita income). So far the main drive has been in the automobile industry: General Motors has a planned link with Isuzu; Ford with Toyo Kogyo; and Chrysler with Mitsubishi. The us has been pushing for up to 50 per cent control in these companies. The Japanese government, which originally was calling for a figure of 20 per cent, recently (late January 1971) came out suggesting a figure of 35 per cent in existing companies in the car industry—and 50 per cent in new companies. According to the well-informed *Far Eastern Economic Review*,<sup>9</sup> the Japanese figure of 35 per cent was felt by the car industry to be the direct result of intense American pressure connected with the reversion of Okinawa (there is, of course, also heavy pressure from us car manufacturers to keep down imports of Japanese cars into the us). It is not hard to see why investing in Japan is so critical for us capital. The slowdown in the us economy considerably stimulated the growth of the multi-national corporations, and many economists have argued

<sup>9</sup> K. Nakamura, 'Japanese Cars Round the Bend,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, No. 5, 1971.

that it has only been the close ties between American capital and the EEC (which did not slow down in time with the us) that have saved the us from an out-and-out slump. American business would like to build the same kind of connections with Japan.

What is the overall balance of forces? The us is, of course, the stronger economy—if stronger means larger. But America is also vulnerable: her exports are several billion dollars greater than her imports annually, and the EEC has already threatened to retaliate if a protectionist bill goes through, starting with America's \$500m. worth of soyabean exports to Europe (much of this from Mills's home state, Arkansas). Nor is it correct to see things simply on a 1:1 basis. Japan's trade with the us is much more important than America's trade with Japan, proportionately, but Japan is also much better able to switch her exportable goods—and at speed. She is also much better placed to absorb many of them domestically, without great adverse effect. The us would have some trouble in doing either—particularly with her vast agricultural exports to Japan. It is not correct simply to see America holding Japan over an economic barrel. It is, however, correct to see Nixon using his last 'political' trump card, Okinawa, in a situation where America is, if anything, at an economic disadvantage. Moreover, whereas the contradictions within the Japanese ruling class are relatively minor, and political mediation highly developed (Sato effortlessly able to provide subsidies for afflicted sectors of the textile industry), the contradictions within the American ruling class and the Administration are deep indeed, and no instruments appear to be at hand to conciliate them.

Furthermore, it needs to be stressed that by its own monetary policy, which has vastly inflated the dollar, and its long-standing policy of plundering the world in order to raise its own living standards, us imperialism has now driven itself into a corner where it can no longer survive by 'free trade'—just as domestically it can no longer combat either the recession or inflation with its own outmoded ideology. If the us decides to wreck the system of 'free trade' which has been the dominant mode of exploitation in the age of imperialism, it could well create conditions, through a worldwide slump, for both greater autarky—and revolution. The dispute with Japan and the moves for a protectionist trade bill have brought out into the open virtually every single issue of American commercial and fiscal policy: the American Selling Price; the oil quotas; the irrationality of the fragmented political system; America's complete scorn for the interests of its own capitalist allies, not to mention that for the masses of the world. If a bill goes through, the cost of 'protecting' itself to America will be to help price itself further out of competitiveness internationally; and, ultimately, to accelerate the flight of capital. And it will make the Japanese government less open to us investment in Japanese industry, which for many of Nixon's backers must be a priority over protecting Southern textile interests. Nixon's deal with Strom Thurmond has festered more than anyone could have hoped: it has caused a serious rift with America's main capitalist ally, Japan; and it has opened a breach between the White House and the Congress which threatens to block virtually the whole of the Nixon domestic programme.

*Jon Halliday*

# interview with

## Ghassan Kannafani on the PFLP and the September attack

### *introduction*

World attention was riveted on the Palestinian liberation movement in September 1970 when the hijacking of four jet-planes and the holding of their passengers as hostages was shortly followed by the outbreak of civil war in Jordan. These developments gave the Palestinian struggle greater publicity than it had ever received before, but they also illustrated the weaknesses of this movement and the precarious political and military terrain it had occupied since it first achieved prominence in the aftermath of the June 1967 Israeli victory.

The Palestinian movement is involved in a struggle against colonial oppression and against the imperialist forces that support both the Israeli and the reactionary Arab states. But it has certain specific features that make its task one of great complexity and difficulty. First, the Palestinian community is geographically fragmented to an extreme degree: it is scattered into different groups inside pre-1967 Israel, the post-1967 West Bank, Gaza, the present territories of Jordan and Lebanon, and the Gulf and other Arab regions. The social base for a revolution, and the operation of class forces within the movement, are therefore far more complex and refracted than in more classical instances. This dispersal of the pre-existent Palestinian social structure is a result of the specific character of Zionist colonialism: so too is another equally important feature of the Palestinian struggle—the nature of the enemy it faces. The Palestinian resistance does not simply represent poor and unarmed masses against a well-armed, but minoritarian ruling class: it confronts an enemy which, because of present Zionist integration of the Israeli working class, is as numerically strong as itself, and is at the moment far better organized socially, politically and militarily.

This difficult situation is aggravated by the lack of any Arab state genuinely committed to the support of a Palestinian revolution. The resistance has been faced since its inception with the alternatives of either operating within the limits set by the neighbouring Arab states—Egypt and Jordan in particular—or of organizing or contributing to the overthrow of the régimes in these countries in order to establish bases solidly behind them.

This objective set of problems has been reflected in, and compounded by, the weakness of the resistance itself. It has been divided into several different trends; it has failed to free itself from the political and financial influence of the Arab states; it has failed to emancipate itself fully from the paralysing heritage of bourgeois nationalism; and it has failed to effect any significant military or political undermining of the Zionist state apparatus. Two main groups have competed for leadership of the movement: al-Fatah, the first group to launch armed struggle (in January 1965), which does not pretend to any more advanced ideology than that of Palestinian nationalism and two groups, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), which designate themselves 'Marxist-Leninist'. These latter two split in February 1969 after disagreements on organizational and political questions, but remained united in their formal insistence on the socialist character of their goals and the need to link the Palestinian struggle with revolution in the Arab states.

Both entitle themselves Marxist and Leninist, and have frequently stated that they are engaged in transforming themselves from being groups with a petty-bourgeois organization and ideology into being Marxist parties, i.e. their aim is to carry through a transition from radical nationalism to Marxism. This process brings with it problems of analysis and identification: as Lenin emphatically warned in his Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question, the foundation document of the Third International: 'It is particularly important to bear in mind the need for determined struggle against attempts to give a Communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries'.<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of a Marxist-Leninist self-characterization by Palestinian groups is a result of an intersection of two factors—the *global* advance in the influence of People's China, of Cuba and of Vietnam, and the specifically *Arab* crisis of Nasserite nationalism which began in 1961 and reached its culmination in the aftermath of the June 1967 defeat. Both the PF and the DF are led by former supporters of Nasserism, and the move towards a new independent position is a result of the crisis of this previously dominant nationalism. The crisis can be resolved when they succeed in creating a Marxist organization and theory for Palestinian and Arab revolution. At the moment they are in a transitional stage, demonstrating the inadequacy of Nasserism, yet themselves still in difficulty about realizing their proclaimed political aims.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 446-467, Moscow 1961.

These ideological weaknesses of the Palestinian organizations, and their inability to surmount the orthodox limits of bourgeois Arab nationalism led to the defeat they have suffered. To some extent bemused by the mystifications of inter-class 'Arab unity', none of the Palestinian groups were able to see early enough that the destruction of the Hashemite state machine in Jordan was an elementary precondition of a serious anti-Zionist struggle. There appears to have been a vague reliance on the 'patriotic' sentiments of the Palestinian sections of the armed forces of the Jordanian monarchy. There was no coherent preparation for overthrowing the Hussein régime, while after June Hussein and his generals were methodically organizing the liquidation of the Palestinian resistance.

The Rogers Peace Plan was announced in June and accepted by Egypt and Jordan: this removed the political space within which the resistance had operated up to then, for this space had not only been won against the opposition of the Jordanian State, it had also been granted under pressure from Egypt and other Arab capitalist régimes. The Egyptian acceptance of the Rogers plan made it clear that this situation would shortly end. The response of the PFLP was the hijackings and arming of the masses discussed below by Ghassan Kanna'fani. They were in no way capable of deterring or delaying the marshalled military apparatus of the Jordanian monarchy. Al-Fatah now hoped for a compromise with Hussein and the constitution of a Jordanian government favourable to the resistance; the Democratic Front called for a nationalist government and 'all power to the resistance, the soldiers and the armed people', but did not possess the political organization capable of giving effect to its slogans; the Popular Front tried, as Kanna'fani puts it, to 'pressure' the Jordanian régime.

From June both strategic and tactical initiative had passed over completely to the Palace. Hussein was thus able to unleash a murderous military onslaught on the guerrillas in Amman and elsewhere. The militants of the Palestinian Resistance displayed the utmost heroism in fighting a defensive battle against the Army, in the worst possible conditions. The immediate outcome was a shattering political and military defeat, which has driven the guerrillas from Amman and allowed Hussein to establish an internal situation stronger than at any time since the June War. Nevertheless, the exemplary courage of the Palestinian combatants revealed the popular support and vitality of the cause of the Resistance; the struggle is by no means over.

But the need to rebuild the Palestinian movement for national liberation on a new basis is evident to many of its militants.

Hitherto the public response of the existing organizations to their rout in September has been limited. The Democratic Front has published a preliminary analysis stressing the internal weaknesses of the resistance movement.<sup>2</sup> Abu Iyad, one of the leaders of al-Fatah, has attacked the

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<sup>2</sup> The PFLP report was published in *al-Harris*, Beirut, Nos. 541, 542 and 543. An abridged translation was published in *International* (London), vol. 4, no. 1.

bureaucratic and luxurious practices of the leadership and has called for consolidation of the resistance around al-Fatah. In the interview published below, Ghassan Kannafani gives the viewpoint of the PFLP five months after its hijackings and subsequent role in the battle of Amman.

Kannafani was born in Acre in 1936 and has been a refugee since 1948. He is a novelist and has been the editor of the PFLP weekly, *al-Hadaf*, since it was started in 1969.

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## interview with Ghassan Kannafani

*The Popular Front is best known in the non-Arab world for its hijackings in September 1970. A lot of criticisms of the hijackings have been made. Some of these are bourgeois criticisms. But there are two others which I would like to pose here. The first criticism has been made both by people within the Palestinian resistance, such as the Central Committee spokesman Kamel Radwan, and by people outside: it is that the hijackings gave Hussein an excuse to attack the resistance at a time when he would not otherwise have done so. The second criticism is made mainly by people outside the resistance movement. This is that the hijackings gave an illusory sense of power and confidence to the Palestinian masses, which was far in advance of their real organizational and military strength. The hijackings were thereby a substitute for organizing the masses, and were a theatrical event that encouraged fantasy. This is not to deny that the hijackings had the positive effect, of giving you a world audience on television, to whom you could explain the purpose of the Palestinian resistance. This point is not in question. But do you now defend the hijackings?*

First of all, I appreciate the fact that you reject bourgeois moralism and obedience to international law. These have been the cause of our tragedy. Now, I would like to answer your questions. I want to talk in general about this kind of operation. I have always said that we don't hijack planes because we love Boeing 707s. We do it for specific reasons, at a specific time and against a specific enemy. It would be ridiculous to hijack planes at the present moment and land them in Cairo, for example, or in Jordan. It would have no meaning now. But you have to analyse the political situation in which we carried out these operations, and the aims we wanted to achieve. Let us recall the situation. On July 23rd Nasser accepted the Rogers plan, and a week later the Jordanian government did so too. Once again the Palestinians were put on the shelf. If you read the Arab and international press between July 23rd and September 6th, you will see that the Palestinian people were again being treated exactly as they were between 1948 and 1967. The Arab papers started writing about how 'heroic' the Palestinians are, but also how 'paralysed' they were, and how there was no hope for these 'brave heroes'. The morale of our people in Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza was extremely low. On top of that a delegation from the leadership of the Palestinian resistance movement, the PLO



Central Committee, went to Cairo to negotiate with Nasser and his government; they spent days and days discussing whether they would allow us to restart broadcasts from Egypt again, after the closing down of our radio in mid-August. The delegation then complained to the Arab League and tried to get them to discuss the question. Before July 23rd the Palestinian resistance was pictured in the Arab press as the great hope of the Palestinian people; at the same time all Arabs consider the Arab League to represent the *lowest* form of politics, the most paralysed political body, in the Arab world. Now we had the highest form of politics approaching the 'dirty shelter' of the Arab League. This showed that the revolution was threatened with liquidation, whether Hussein smashed it physically or not. Everyone—including those who criticized the PFLP operations—was convinced that the destruction of the resistance was an essential part of the Rogers plan.

*You agree that Nasser and the Egyptian régime supported this?*

The Egyptian régime was one step removed from direct participation in this liquidation, since it had no direct contact with the Palestinians; it was in a safer position. The only way the Egyptian régime could help Hussein was by keeping silent: and that it did, to the extent that it could resist the pressure of the Arab masses. For the first three days of the fighting in September the Egyptian government, and all the other Arab governments, were silent, because they thought that the resistance movement could not survive for more than three days. Then they were forced to move, because the people in the streets of Egypt, Syria and Lebanon were angry at the massacre; but the first five thousand Palestinian victims fell in Amman in silence, and no-one complained.

The Rogers plan presupposed the liquidation of our movement, and this was now approaching in an atmosphere of Palestinian submissiveness. Therefore, something had to be done; first of all, to tell the world that we were not going to be put on the shelf for the second time, and secondly to tell the world that the days when the us and reactionary Arabs could dictate to our people were over. Moreover there was the question of the morale, the fighting ability, of our own people. We could not let things remain like that when a massacre was on the way, even if we had sat down quietly on the steps of His Majesty's palace, and kissed his hand.

*So you don't accept the notion that Hussein himself was unsure of what to do, but that the army forced him to move.*

Absolutely not. This is complete rubbish. It is true that there are still parts of the resistance movement who think it is possible to 'neutralize' the Jordanian régime; but this is nonsense. As for the argument that the hijackings provoked and accelerated Hussein's attack, the short answer to this is that the Jordanian régime had already stopped guerrilla actions south of the Dead Sea, blocked forces moving towards Eilat, and prevented our units attacking the Naharin dam in the North of the West Bank. At the same time the Jordanian army put mines at most of the points where guerrillas crossed the Jordan river,

and forced the guerrillas to go through certain specific corridors; these corridors were ambushes. They were sending us to be killed anyway. This was all happening *before* the September massacre; it was a massacre in another form.

Thus the real clash was taking place all the time: they were forbidding us to practise our *raison d'être*. They were preventing us making raids against Israel, and suppressing our political activities in the cities. So our own actions, including the planes, were not provocations; they were the movement of a revolution trying to escape from a circle in which it was trapped.

*How was your action going to do that?*

All our activities were an attempt to get out of our situation. For example, we held demonstrations in Amman shouting 'Down with Nasser' and 'Down with Egypt'; perhaps they were a mistake, but they were one of the many ways in which we tried to break out of the circle.

*It was obvious that Hussein was going to attack the resistance once he had accepted the Rogers plan. You then had a choice: either you waited for him to attack you, or you could attack him first. Yet in either case, it seems that you never intended to overthrow Hussein, and never imagined that you could. Wasn't your aim essentially to preserve the organizational position of the resistance, and wasn't this the idea behind the hijackings?*

You mustn't isolate the hijackings from the total political context. For example, al-Fatah sent rocket-launchers to Ghor-Safi below the Dead Sea, and blew up the potassium factories. We were all trying to break out, to give the Palestinian masses more hope, and to say that the battle was going on. We wanted to put pressure on the Jordanian government to postpone its attack on us. Our relationship with the Jordanian government is not based on common convictions, only on pressure; we have no common ground with them. It was a question of a balance of power. All our actions, from the great error of going to the Arab League to the hijackings themselves (which were the highest form of pressure) were forms of pressure. Some of them were miscalculated negatively, and some positively. On the other hand, there certainly were individuals and organizations within the resistance who did believe there was a possibility of overthrowing the king. They were in error.

*Yet didn't even then believe that you could overthrow the king, by waiting for him to attack you? It was thought that the people would be united by the initial adoption of a defensive position.*

That was our dilemma, and we were in crisis. The resistance, and all the Arab military governments, were in a crisis which was the price of the Rogers plan. If we had decided to fight Hussein, we should have chosen the time and the place. But as Hussein attacked us, we had no choice, we had to fight at a time and place of his choosing.

Thus the hijackings were part of an extremely dangerous ceramic that

made up the Arab and Palestinian map from July 1970 until now. There were a lot of other factors too. We *were* in a corner, and we had two possible ways of getting out. Either we could defend ourselves till victory, against Hussein, or we could 'lose the battle by winning it' if we attacked Hussein. But the outcome was not decided only by us, it was also decided by the other side; they had more plans than we did. You should remember that Hussein had to prove to the Americans that they did not need to create a Palestinian state. The Americans were wondering whether to bring in a Suharto-type officer to replace King Hussein with a coup in Amman, which would usher in a Palestinian state there. The Israelis were also discussing this. Hussein wanted to win back his prestige, and this he did; Nixon has now changed his mind, and the Americans once again believe that Hussein is capable of handling the situation.

As for the hijackings, their psychological importance was much greater than their military importance, at this stage of the revolution. Now, if we had been at the final stage of the revolution, or even at the advanced first stages of the revolution and we had hijacked planes, I would have been the first to denounce it. But in the preparatory phase of the revolution, military operations have their psychological importance.

*You still think you were correct to carry out the hijackings therefore?*

I think that, generally speaking, these operations were correct. Maybe we made some tactical mistakes. Perhaps we should have made the whole Palestinian resistance share much more in responsibility for them, and then if they had decided two hours later to release the planes, perhaps we should have released them. Maybe we should not have been so stubborn. But you can't imagine what this all meant to the people at that time. You raised the question of whether the hijackings created an atmosphere among the Palestinian masses which the resistance movement was unable to absorb and organize. This may have been the case. But even if it is true, we fought for twelve days in September, and we obliged the Jordanian army to fight the longest war in its history because of what we had done.

*In September, many commentators believed that the Palestinian resistance could only win, either if the Jordanian army itself split and a section of it went over to the resistance, or if an outside Arab régime—Syria or Iraq—intervened and helped. Did you expect either of these eventualities to occur?*

I don't think either of these would have given the resistance a victory. In a guerilla war conditions are different, and what is important is the *aim* of a particular action. The aim of the Jordanian régime was to finish the resistance completely. But the aim of the Palestinian resistance was not to overthrow the Jordanian régime, but merely to put pressure on it. Neither of these two aims succeeded, so nobody really won. Of course, to some extent, we had to surrender certain points and go underground. But the battle is still going on; the retreat to underground activity or to the mountains is only a tactical aspect of regulating the balance of power.

*You don't deny that both the possibility of operations against Israel from Jordan and the politico-military room for manoeuvre of the resistance within Jordan have been massively reduced by the September events? Isn't the Hashemite monarchy continuing to try to disarm the militia in Amman and to win direct control of your refugee camps, and other strong positions?*

I know. I don't deny that the Jordanian régime has won some ground, and forced us to retreat. But I would like to point out two things, to put the September events in their context. The Jordanian régime had nearly succeeded in preventing us from making any raids against Israel before September; this was not a result of September, but one of the factors that led to September. We had to tell our people we were doing something; we couldn't sit in Amman and do nothing. Now we are in the mountains, in a preparatory stage, and the revolution has taken a more realistic form than it did when people thought it was at a very advanced stage. I am against saying that we were defeated, because in the past, our real strength was exaggerated and we now have a size proportionate to our strength. We never had room for manoeuvring in front of our own people and world public opinion, and some leaders had no such room even in front of their own militants. It will take a long time to restore the previous balance of power with the Jordanian government and we will continue to retreat until we have a correct understanding of our own strength. There are plenty of examples in history of people with rifles living in the mountains, ambushing a truck and shooting the odd soldier, and achieving nothing else. This is our problem, and there is a debate going on within the resistance about it; indeed the PFLP is being accused of not wanting to surrender the militia's arms. In fact, I don't believe that an al-Fatah fighter would surrender his arms.

*To what extent has the Popular Front changed its strategy since September? George Habbash was reported in January to be saying that the time had come to overthrow the Hashemite monarchy. Is this true?*

The Popular Front has always insisted that we have four equal enemies: Israel, world Zionism, world imperialism led by the USA, and Arab reaction. The overthrow of these reactionary Arab régimes is part of our strategy, part of liberating Palestine. The overthrow of the Jordanian régime must be a part of the programme for a Palestinian FLN. We have to do it, but not necessarily tomorrow. We have always insisted on the need to do this, but it must form part of a general strategic line.

*It is now five months since the events of September. What, in your opinion, have been the effects on the Palestinian people?*

It is normal for some to leave during periods of hard fighting. Advanced periods of struggle are attractive to people, who join because there is no price for joining the revolution. They stay at home, they continue going to their jobs; if someone is studying at Damascus university for example, he can take a year off and work with the resistance. On the other hand, shocks like September crystallize the strength of the revolution, because they have forced it into the moun-

tain. There are now commandos living in the Ajloun forests of north Jordan; they are living in caves, with limited water and food, and little ammunition. In this situation, we can't expect that the thousands who went around Amman in khaki carrying their Kalashnikovs will live this kind of life. In the cities, organization and recruitment are different. We used to have a known office, and we could recruit and train people openly in the camps. Now we have a different relationships with the masses: we are not wearing khaki and walking down the street, and we are not making speeches in the camps. We have to operate in a different way, and that is exactly where a *party* is necessary. Although it is difficult in the mountains, the situation is even more difficult in the cities. A lot of people had a bourgeois sense of haste, but we are now in a stage of retreat. Militarily and politically, this is not a mistake, and it is not dangerous. But it does pose psychological problems, because of the need to keep the people with us. Some elements on the West Bank are now calling for a Palestinian state. We knew that they were discussing this plan in private among each other for three years after the June war and that they were in contact with the Israelis, with the Arab reactionaries and with the imperialists. It is only since the resistance movement was forced backwards, that they have dared to raise this project openly. At the same time, the events in September made the masses on the West Bank aware of what it would mean to have Hussein back again, and the resulting reaction of a people under occupation and without a proper organization is to say: 'Anything, except Hussein again.' For the West Bank a Palestinian state would be better than having King Hussein's régime again. This is a very temporary reaction, resulting from a psychological shock.

Gaza is another story altogether. The resistance was on the defensive on the West Bank and on the East Bank, but it escalated suddenly in Gaza in a remarkable way. The Popular Front has the strongest influence in Gaza, so we acted. Let me mention one specific case, that of Youssef el-Khatib Abu Dhumman. He was the head of Popular Front military operations in Gaza, and he was killed at the beginning of December. For six days there were continuous strikes and mass demonstrations in Gaza; so everyone knew that men were still fighting. This raised the level of action in Gaza, although it made our casualties higher than they had ever been before.

#### *What has created the greater militancy in Gaza?*

The population of Gaza is 360,000; the majority are Palestinian refugees. In Gaza people are familiar with arms. They were trained by the PLA under the Egyptian administration, unlike the West Bank. Another factor is that the Arab Nationalist Movement was suppressed in Gaza by the Egyptians, but never to the extent that it was in the West Bank. When Gaza was occupied the ANM had its cells there; whereas Hussein handed the West Bank to the Israelis in a 'clean' state, as he has put it himself—there was not a single ANM cell there. So we had the minimum base to start with in Gaza. There is also a psychological factor: Gaza is surrounded on the west by the sea, on the south by Sinai, on the east by the Negev, and on the north by the Israeli state.

The Palestinians there are psychologically besieged, and used to difficulty. On the West Bank contacts were much easier in the first months of occupation; it was simpler to send money, men and weapons into the area. The people on the West Bank got used to easier methods, and they weren't able to resist Israeli counter-measures. In Gaza they were tougher and more professional. Another factor was that the Jordanian régime in Amman kept on paying the salaries of teachers, detectives, state employees and the like; this is the only way a reactionary régime can keep the loyalty of these people. The Israelis also paid salaries to these people. It is not true that most of them were *against* the resistance, but they were certainly not in a hurry; in the Gaza strip people were under greater pressure.

I would now like to make some more general comments. In every revolution there is an initial wave of enthusiasm which peters out after a time, because it is not deeply rooted. I think that our first wave reached its peak at Karame, in March 1968; after that, we started to decline, because we were returning to our real proportions. In such periods of relapse, there are always divisions, exaggerations romanticizations, tendencies to individualism and to turning the revolution into a myth and so on. These are the illnesses of the underdeveloped world, and they express themselves in a period when one is not engaged in real revolutionary work, but one is nevertheless regarded as making a revolution. If the revolution doesn't develop out of this, if it doesn't do something like Mao's long march, or acquire more force from outside through the liberation of an Arab state, then defeats will have a dangerous effect on the morale of the masses. The period of decline did not begin in September, it began after Karame.

*Can we now come to the question of Israel itself? Do you think there is such a thing as an Israeli nation? The Matxpen group and others inside Israel have argued that there may not originally have been a Jewish nation, but the Jewish immigrants who have come to Palestine have established there a new community which can be called the Israeli nation.*

That is the Maxime Rodinson solution. It is a fantastic intellectual compromise; it means that any group of colonialists who occupy an area and stay there for a while can justify their existence, by saying they are developing into a nation.

*So you don't think the Israelis are a nation?*

No, I don't. It is a colonialist situation. What you have is a group of people, brought for several reasons, justified and unjustified, to a particular area of the world. Together, they all participate in a colonialist situation, while between them there are also relations of exploitation. I agree that Israeli workers are exploited. But this is not the first time this has happened. The Arabs in Spain were in the same position. There were classes among the Arabs in Spain, but the main contradiction was between the Arabs in Spain as a whole and the Spanish people.

*So you do see contradictions within the Israeli population which can divide them in the future, and provide the Palestinian resistance with allies within Israeli society?*

Of course. But this will not happen easily. First of all, we must escalate the revolution to the stage where it poses an alternative to them, because up to now it has not been so. It is nonsense to start talking about a 'Democratic Palestine' at this stage; theoretically speaking it establishes a good basis for future debates, but this debate can only occur when the Palestinian resistance is a realistic alternative.

*You mean it must be able to provide a practical alternative for the Israeli proletariat?*

Yes. But at the moment it is very difficult to get the Israeli working-class to listen to the voice of the Palestinian resistance, and there are several obstacles to this. These include the Israeli ruling class and the Arab ruling classes. The Arab ruling classes do not present either Israelis or Arabs with a prospect of democracy. One might well ask: where is there a democracy in the Arab world? The Israeli ruling class is obviously an obstacle as well. But there is a third obstacle, which is the real, if small, benefit that the Israeli proletariat derives from its colonialist status within Israel. For not only is the situation of Israeli workers a colonialist one, but they gain from the fact that Israel as a whole has been recruited to play a specific role in alliance with imperialism. Two kinds of movement are required to break down these barriers, in order for there to be future contact between an anti-Zionist Israeli proletariat and the Arab resistance movement. These will be the resistance movement on the one hand and an opposition movement within Israel itself; but there is no real sign of such a convergence yet, since, although Matzpen exists, what would be necessary is a mass proletarian movement.

*Interviewer: FH*

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## The Fighting in Eritrea

One of the more anomalous heroes of the anti-fascist struggle was Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia. Overrun by fascist Italy in 1935, Ethiopia and its leader became symbols of the fight for freedom, and when British troops put Selassie back on his throne in 1941 it was generally assumed that such a restoration was in accordance with the sentiments of his people. In fact the reinstatement of Selassie was a dry run for the more important and bloody restorations of France, Greece, Vietnam and Korea: under the Axis occupation a guerrilla movement had arisen which fought the fascist invader, but which also sought to replace the Emperor. This had to be, and was, put down by British troops and administrators.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The conflict between the Emperor's international image and his domestic practice was illustrated in 1967, when his name was proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize; the normal investigations were undertaken to check the candidate's suitability, and the project was dropped when he was discovered to have exposed the bodies of murdered political opponents in the streets in 1960.

Since then the Ethiopian Emperor has been a stalwart defender of western interests in Africa. The British made sure that he did not encourage nationalists in their colonies to the south, and in 1953 he allowed the us to build a communications base at Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. His army did loyal service in Korea, fighting for the UN, and received western support in return. Between 1953 and 1970 Ethiopia received \$147 million in us military assistance, nearly one half of all us military assistance to African countries in that period, and at the moment Ethiopia receives \$12 million a year in military aid, two thirds of us military aid to the continent. In February 1971 Ethiopia's importance was underlined when us Army chief of Staff, General Westmoreland, visited the base at Asmara.

The Ethiopian régime gets this special treatment for several reasons.<sup>2</sup> First of all it has a more secure ruling class than many other African countries, possibly the most secure of all. The country was only under direct colonial rule for six years and the indigenous pre-capitalist ruling class was not undermined in the way it was elsewhere; the cracks resulting from the anti-fascist struggle were papered over by the British. The ruling class is also one that rests on agrarian exploitation, akin to European feudalism, in which most land is owned by the Coptic Church, and its head, Haile Selassie. Moreover, Ethiopia is officially Christian, and more sympathetic to the white west than the Muslim North Africa and the religiously diverse black South. (In fact, the majority of Ethiopia's population are probably Muslims, but the Amhara Christian ethnic group dominate the country and fiddle the population statistics.)

With these features, Ethiopia has been given a specific role to play. It has hegemonized the enfeebled Organization of African Unity, which has its headquarters in Addis Abbaba, Ethiopia's capital. It has, even more importantly, served as a base for us and Israeli penetration of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The situation in much of Africa is now, from imperialism's point of view, under control and the OAU happily anaesthetized. The Uganda coup against Obote was welcome. Where the major threat comes from is the Soviet build-up in the Indian Ocean and the threat to neo-colonial 'stability' in the Persian Gulf.<sup>3</sup>

To meet these developments the us and Israel have stepped in behind Ethiopia. The base at Kagnew, Asmara, now has 4,000 us personnel, including dependants, and serves as the main communications base for the western Indian Ocean, with its eastern partners at Canterbury, New Zealand, and North West Cape, Australia<sup>4</sup>; this base, using very-low-frequency (VLF) transmitters can control Polaris submarine movements in the Indian Ocean, and relay us diplomatic radio from the whole of the Middle East back to Washington. The other major problem comes in the Red Sea: shipping coming from the Persian Gulf to Israel or the

<sup>2</sup> Background information on the Ethiopian régime can be found in 'Ethiopia,' *NLA* 30, March-April 1965, and in 'The Struggle in Ethiopia,' *Black Dwarf*, January 30th, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> See Fred Halliday, 'National Liberation in the Gulf,' *NLA* 38.

<sup>4</sup> There is a general discussion of us strategy in Asia by Michael Klare in 'The Great South Asian War', *Tricontinental*, 18.



Suez Canal could be blocked at the narrow mouth of the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, by People's Yemen, across the water, and both the US and Israel are worried by this: Israel's response has been to provide the Ethiopians with military advisers, particularly in counter-insurgency, and is now said to be constructing tracking stations on three small Ethiopian islands close to the Red Sea mouth (Dahlek, Fatema and Helep). Their aim is to secure the internal situation inside Ethiopia so that the Emperor and his successors will continue to guarantee their interests; at the same time they want to use Ethiopia as a watching point, and possible jumping-off point, to meet threats in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Israel has also a specific reason in wanting to help an anti-Arab pro-western régime that will give it a base to the south of Egypt and Sudan.

The greatest single threat to the Ethiopian Emperor comes from the guerrillas in Eritrea, the Ethiopian province that runs along the whole of Ethiopia's coast, and contains both the US communications base at Asmara, and Ethiopia's two ports, Assab and Massawa. Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia in 1952 and there has been armed resistance since 1961. By the end of 1970 the situation was serious: an Ethiopian general was killed and Ethiopia declared a state of emergency throughout the whole province. However, the Eritrean guerrilla movement was in an ambiguous position: at the moment of greatest military success, it was politically divided, as a result of tensions within the movement that had been growing for several years.

### Who are the Eritreans?

Eritrea is an area of about 47,000 square miles, with a population of between 1.5 and 2.5 millions.<sup>5</sup> Most of the country is uncultivated scrubland, with only 3 per cent cultivated at the present time. Some of the population, in the northern highlands, are settled farmers owning their own land and being ruled by village chiefs subject to communal pressures. These farmers are Christians, of the same religious affinity as the Ethiopian Amhara but speaking a different Semitic language, Tigrinia.

In the lowlands of Eritrea the population are semi-nomads, mainly Muslims, who speak either Arabic or Tigre, a language close to Tigrinia, and whose social organization is tribal. Together these Christian farmers and Muslim nomads make up 80 per cent of the Eritrean population. The rest live in the towns, Asmara (250,000), and the Red Sea ports. Here the population are mainly Christian. The exact proportion of Christian to Muslim within the Eritrean population is, for obvious reasons, a matter of contention; the Ethiopian government claims that only 14 per cent of the Eritreans are Muslims, but the figure is probably somewhere between 60 per cent and 70 per cent. Yet this division is not the only one within the population; there are several

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<sup>5</sup> There is a description of the area and its main features in G. K. N. Trevaakia, *Eritrea: A colony in transition 1941-52* (OUP, 1960). Some of his statements have to be taken critically, since he was a leading British administrator in the area; later he went on to be a Governor of Aden.

minorities within each religious group, speaking a different language and claiming a different ancestry; tribal and regional differences also retain their vitality.

A lot of effort is spent by both Ethiopian and Eritrean spokesmen arguing about the historical status of the entity 'Eritrea'. In the early centuries of Christianity a Christian kingdom centred on Axum, in present-day Eritrea, ruled an area roughly equivalent to the province as now constituted, and later Amhara control of the area was never consistent. From the time of the first European travellers onwards it is known that the area 'beyond the Mareb river', i.e. between Ethiopia proper and the sea, *was* separate from the Christian realm of the interior. But the entity 'Eritrea' as presently constituted did not evolve or subsist consistently in the past: it is the creation of Italian colonialism which occupied the area in the 1880's and held it until 1941.<sup>6</sup> (It need hardly be pointed out that the legitimacy of the anti-imperialist struggle in Eritrea does not depend on historical arguments of this kind; there are instances to back up any claim in the zone's history.) The boundaries of Italy's Red Sea colony were fixed with the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik, Haile Selassie's grandfather and a close ally of British imperialism in the campaign against the forces of the Mahdi in the Sudan. The population had a certain sense of historical specificity, and all were united, for different reasons, in hostility to the Ethiopian Emperor. Even so the experience of colonialism did little to homogenize the population.

Until the 1930's Italian colonialism made little change in the area. About 4,000 Italians settled in the cultivable areas and some light industry developed, but education was minimal and there was no large-scale development of resources. This situation altered radically when, with the invasion of Ethiopia, Eritrea became the jumping-off point for the construction of Italy's East African Empire: in the 1930's the Italian population rose to 40,000 and industry in Asmara developed; thousands of peasants and nomads came into the town to work. Many Eritreans, Christians at least, enlisted in the Italian army as infantrymen and served in the Ethiopian campaign.

Eritrea fell to the British in 1941, and they administered it for 11 years until handing it over to Ethiopia in 1952.<sup>7</sup> The British largely took over the fascist administration and did little to develop the economy, but they did permit political activity, and the physiognomy of Eritrean politics became clear for the first time in this period. The major issue was the status of the colony: some Christians were afraid of Muslim domination, and of becoming an annexed southern section of the Arab world, and they favoured union or federation with Ethiopia; others favoured independence for Eritrea since they did not want to be dominated by the Emperor and they agreed with the dominant trend among the Muslims; this was for independence. Ethiopia was pushing for annexation of the area, since it gave it access to the sea, and sent in

<sup>6</sup> One indication of the uncertain status of the area is that the word used by Arabic-speaking Eritreans for the area is 'Eritrea', the word invented by the Italians.

<sup>7</sup> Trevisakis, see note 5, gives an account of the British occupation and of the activities on the UN.

money and armed assassins to bribe or threaten politicians who opposed its policies. In this it received the tacit support of the British who were pushing for union with Ethiopia in order to ensure the latter's continued support for imperialist policies in Africa and the UN.

In 1948 a UN Commission visited Eritrea to discover the wishes of the people, but found that the people were divided. Ethiopia and Britain were able to mobilize international support—Ethiopia backed the UN in Korea—and in 1950 the UN General Assembly voted that Eritrea become part of Ethiopia with federal rights. It was to have full internal control, with its own Parliament and Government, its own flag and its two official languages, Arabic and Tigrinia. Equal status was given to Ethiopia, and the two were to be ruled by a Federal Government, with control over defence and foreign affairs. Protests in Eritrea were ignored, and indeed many Eritreans hoped that this resolution would work out. But it soon proved to be a face-saving way of annexing Eritrea to the Ethiopian crown. Britain handed the area over to Ethiopia in 1952 and the Ethiopian army entered Eritrea in the same year. Political parties were banned and the Eritrean General Union of Labour Syndicates, led by a Christian politician Woldeab Wolde-mariam, was suppressed. Later, the two Eritrean languages were deposed and Amhara was made the official language. Amhara officials were put in charge of the administration, and the Eritrean Parliament and Government became rubber-stamp organizations. In 1959 the Eritrean flag was suppressed, and in 1962, 10 years after the original annexation, Haile Selassie announced that the Federation had been abolished. Eritrea was now an integral part of Ethiopia and its autonomous rights had been scrapped.

Eritrean opposition to this process was at first along peaceful, legalist, lines. Eritrean leaders petitioned the UN for recognition of Eritrean rights as specified in the 1950 General Assembly Resolution. These appeals had no effect. Within Eritrea the unions and pre-1952 parties tried to continue underground activity, and in February 1958 there was a long, drawn-out general strike in Asmara and the port of Massawa, in support of demands for the legalization of unions, minimum standards of safety and health and minimum wages. These strikers were shot at and suppressed: 80 were killed or wounded, and hundreds imprisoned. It became clear that nothing could be expected of outside powers, who had anyway intended already to prop up Haile Selassie, and that the existing forms of struggle could make no impact on the determined policy of annexation begun in 1952. In this context the *Eritrean Liberation Front* was formed.

### **The Eritrean Liberation Front**

The ELF was founded by two different groups of Eritreans: militants active in the 1940's and 1950's who saw the need for a new form of struggle, and exiles who had been politicized abroad. It was particularly among the latter that the ELF developed. The growth of unemployment in Eritrea after 1952 led to a mass emigration of workers to Saudi Arabia and the Sudan; at its height there were around 30,000 in the former and 20,000 in the latter. Other Eritreans went to study in Cairo.

In 1960 the ELF was founded as an organization, with cells of seven, and with the political aim of fighting for the independence of Eritrea. The Front collected £500 and used it to buy some old Italian rifles left over from the fascist occupation. Cadres were sent back into Eritrea from abroad, and the first attack was launched in September 1961, by 13 members of the ELF.<sup>8</sup>

Military developments since then have followed a familiar pattern. From 1961 to 1965 fighting was at the level of sporadic raids and attacks on Ethiopian garrisons and installations, and the Front gradually built its organization inside Eritrea and its contacts abroad. In 1962 it was able to buy some rifles from a Sultan in British-occupied South Arabia, and to get arms filtered through the civil war in the Yemen. In 1964 they established contact with the Arab states and with China, and money and arms began to come from both. In 1965 the war entered a second phase with a much wider scale of fighting and the Front set up its own provincial system, dividing Eritrea into five zones (*wilayat*), each under the control of a military commander. It was in this period that the ELF began to control and administer a liberated area which Ethiopia could penetrate, but not hold.

In 1967-68 Ethiopia launched a counter-offensive. Using its airpower Ethiopia attacked Eritrean villages and over 300 were burnt in February and March 1967. Then, after the Israeli victory of June 1967 the support of the Arab régimes contracted, and the ELF suffered a number of setbacks. Over 30,000 Eritrean nomads fled to the Sudan to escape from Ethiopian bombing, and Ethiopia was able to marshall some support from Christian leaders in the Eritrean countryside. In 1968 the ELF hit back: new supplies of arms arrived from People's China, and relations with the Arab states were restrengthened. By the end of 1970 the ELF was in a stronger military position than ever before: no Ethiopian posts were secure outside the main towns, and the ELF was able to cut communications at will. It received a moment of world-wide attention in November and December when it killed Tshomi Ergetu, an Ethiopian general, and was able to publish photographs showing its troops shunting a captured train off a bridge. But the Ethiopian counter-attack was severe: on December 24 1970 the air force bombed the town of Keren, held by the ELF, and over 700 people, mainly women and children, were reported to have been killed. Ethiopia declared a state of emergency, blaming the war on certain 'foreign governments' and increased its military presence in the province; even before the state of emergency Haile Selassie had about 30,000 troops there. In March 1971 André Fontaine of *Le Monde* visited Eritrea, and reported that the Ethiopians had inflicted a setback on the guerrillas: they had depopulated the Eritrean-Sudanese border and destroyed the wells there; communications within Eritrea were now much securer.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The account of the ELF is based on interviews with Front members, including Secretary-General Sabbe, and Woldeab Woldemariam, a Christian ELF leader and trade unionist. Other information has been gathered from occasional press reports, and from the publications of the Front themselves. The ELF has issued numerous pamphlets on Eritrea, and it publishes a monthly paper, *al-Thawra*, (*The Revolution*). The most readily accessible statement of the ELF's position is in *Tricontinental* 15, but more material can be obtained by writing directly to their main office: Eritrean Liberation Front, P.O. Box 5226, Damascus, Syria.

<sup>9</sup> *Le Monde*, April 8, 1971.

The main ELF strongholds are in the Muslim rural areas, especially in the Baraka Lowlands around Keren and Agordat, and in the northern part of the coastal plain. The Christian highlands are open to the ELF and the front can cut communications there but the character of the terrain and of the inhabitants makes it less secure. Action in the cities has been organized on a different basis: it has been possible for the Front to capture and hold villages and small market towns, like Keren and Agordat, until the Ethiopians have mustered enough firepower and artillery to fight back. Even when they do, ELF militants, tax-collectors and recruiters, can operate. In the major towns, Asmara and Massawa, the Front has been able to carry out urban guerilla activities in support of their rural action: in 1966 they shot the chief of the CID in Asmara and in 1969 they blew up the electricity generators. But political action is difficult. Over 2,000 ELF members and sympathizers were arrested in Asmara during and after 1962, and the town is riddled with paid informers. Trade-union activity is difficult and strikers are rounded up rapidly. Like Phnom Penh, Asmara can be strangled by encirclement but the Ethiopians have centred their firepower there, and the US troops at Kagnew have been used too in suppressing demonstrations. The economy of the town has suffered considerably in recent years, but the guerrillas will not be in a position to capture it definitively in the near future. The military extermination of Ethiopia's presence in Eritrea will probably be impossible, as long as the Addis Abbaba régime retains its present character and Ethiopia's foreign backers continue to supply it with the necessary finance and arms.

### The Political Options facing the ELF

The ELF's military success contrasts with considerable disagreement within it on the major *political issues* it faces. The Front does have an agreed platform, and a practice linked to its instrumentation; but within this platform there are several, interrelated, points of disunion. Officially the ELF calls for the following: Full independence for Eritrea; A Popular Democratic Government; Ownership of land to those who work it; Arabic and Tigrinia to be the two official languages in Eritrea; Reliance on the farmers, nomads and workers in political action. In practice, the Front has tried to implement important reforms within the liberated area in order to effect this programme and strengthen the revolution. It has encouraged nomads to settle and have built schools as centres around which settled communities can form. It has also carried out education among the members of the liberation army, stressing the unity of the Eritrean people and the harmful effects of tribal and religious differences. Its programme envisages the expropriation of foreign firms operating inside Eritrea and an economic development of the country. Such plans will have to await liberation, but visitors to the liberated areas or people ambushed by the ELF have all reported on the high degree of organization and educational activity among the guerrillas.

Nevertheless, there are major disagreements, on at least three major topics: these are the question of the relation of Muslims to Christians, the question of the relationship of Eritrea to the Arab world, and the question of the relationship of the Eritrean movement to opposition movements inside Ethiopia.

The major opposition to Ethiopia from the 1940's onwards has come from the Muslims in Eritrea, and they have formed the majority within the ELF, not just in proportion to their majority position within Eritrea, but disproportionately so. For example, the names of those ELF members killed in battle are nearly all Muslim names, and the areas of greatest strength of the ELF are in the Muslim areas. Moreover, those Christians who have supported the Front have encountered problems both within Eritrea and outside. A major index of inter-religious tolerance is the willingness of both types of Eritrean to eat together, and the ELF has had considerable difficulty in getting Muslims and Christians within the Front to do so. Despite the policies of the leadership many Muslims joined the Front for particularist reasons and oppose the official line of the ELF. Those cadres who have been trained abroad—in Arab countries, in China and Cuba—have been notable for the degree to which inter-religious disagreements among them have declined. The Christians in Eritrea fear that in an independent Eritrea they would be dominated by the Muslim majority, and although they resent domination by Amhara Christians now they are afraid that things might be even worse under an independent government. The position of the Christian minority in the southern Sudan is not reassuring in this respect.

#### ELF and the Arab World

The question of the religious character of the movement is tightly related to the question of Eritrea's relation to the Arab world. Since 1964 Arab states have supported the ELF and Muslims in the ELF tend to see themselves as part of the Arab world. Those who do regard the Eritrean struggle as one for the liberation of the 'Arab homeland', and those who don't may have disguised their position at times in order to ensure continued support from the Arab states. The propaganda put out by the Arab states for the ELF stresses the Arab and Muslim character of the Eritrean people, and ELF maps sometimes show Eritrea as a southern flank of the Arab world. The ELF's two main areas for training and jumping-off points for Eritrea are the Sudan and People's Yemen: the former has given intermittent backing to the struggle, depending on the character of the régime in Khartoum, but there has been support since the May 1969 coup there.<sup>10</sup> Support from Aden has been forthcoming since the independence of South Yemen in November 1967. Secretary-General Mohammad Othman Sabbe has stressed that 'Most Eritreans are oriented to the Arabs' and that an independent Eritrea would have 'close relations' with the Arab world; whether Eritrea would join the Arab League was 'a difficult question'.

The questions this ambiguity raises are clear. If Eritrea is to become a state for all Eritreans, and a state independent of the policies of the Arab League, then it will have to emphasize its distinct character and prevent its assimilation by the Arab states. For Christians within the

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<sup>10</sup> However, in March 1971 Sudanese President Numeiry announced that he would be willing to stop aid to the ELF if Ethiopia ended its support to the guerrillas in South Sudan.

movement the issue is an immediate one: Woldeab Woldemariam says that he has been prohibited from entering Saudi Arabia ever since he had an argument in 1962 with the Saudi Foreign Minister, who told him that 'We support the Muslims, not the Christians' in Eritrea. The same thing happened to him in 1964 when he went to Libya. On the other hand, the ELF as a whole has already clashed with Saudi Arabia on this issue. Since 1967 Saudi Arabia has cut off support for the ELF and banned all mention of it in the Saudi press, and this was provoked by the fact that ELF members used Saudi Arabia as a transit for trips to and from People's China. The increasingly vacillating stance of the Egyptian régime may also contribute to a parallel evolution; the Egyptians have always maintained a qualified position on the ELF because of their relations with Haile Selassie in the OAU. The relationship to the Arab states will depend on how the internal divisions within the ELF are resolved.

### Anti-monarchism

The third major issue facing the ELF is the question of the anti-monarchic struggle in Ethiopia as a whole. The Eritreans are the best organized and most advanced section of this movement, but there are other groups: peasant resistance movements have been operating for several years in provinces of Ethiopia (Gojjam, Sidamo, Borama) and in the period 1967-69 Addis Abbaba university was the scene of a protracted student struggle. There is also a small group, believed to be a communist party, the *Ethiopian People's Council*. The relations between the ELF and these groups have been difficult. Students from Addis Abbaba university have gone to Eritrea to join the ELF, and Eritrean students have played an important part in the movement in Addis Abbaba itself, but the ELF's official position is that the Eritrean struggle is a separate struggle, and that the opposition groups within Ethiopia are too weak for there to be any significant organizational co-operation. Conversely, Ethiopian opposition forces may not always accept the right of Eritrea to secession. Parts of the Ethiopian student movement does accept this right, and is critical of the lack of co-operation manifested by the ELF; this too is an issue of disagreement within the ELF itself and is closely connected to the two other issues already discussed. If the ELF did become part of a wider Ethiopian opposition movement it would be opting for a position of independence from the political positions of the Arab states and for a securely interconfessional alliance. Above all, it is impossible to see how the Eritreans could ever inflict a definitive defeat on the Ethiopian army without a parallel anti-monarchic revolution inside Ethiopia itself. In that sense the victory of the opposition inside Ethiopia appears to be a strategic *prerequisite* for the liberation of Eritrea.

### The Split Within The ELF

These confessional and political divisions and the unresolved questions already mentioned have contributed to dividing the ELF's own organization, and since the middle of 1969 the ELF has in practice been divided into two groups—the ELF-General Command and the ELF-Popular Revolutionary Forces. Both groups accuse the other of Muslim con-

fessionalism and tribalism and of being allies of reactionary régimes. Both claim to predominate within Eritrea itself. The General Command derive the split from the setbacks of 1967-68, when, they claim, there developed a split between the embourgeoisified political leadership abroad and the fighters within. According to the General Command, Secretary-General Sabbe and other members of the High Council of the ELF refused to return to Eritrea, misappropriated funds and exploited differences within the ranks of the ELF. In response the General Command dismissed the High Council and appointed a new 38-man General Command.

The Popular Revolutionary Forces accuse the General Command of being representative of backward, tribal, Muslim elements from the Baraka lowlands and of having defied the military commands of the ELF leadership during and after the 1967-68 setbacks. In particular they accuse the General Command of having allowed the Ethiopian government to win back the Christians in the southern Dankalia area, and of having assassinated two Christian members of the ELF High Council, Kedanie Keflouk and Waldai Kahsai, who were stationed in Kassala, the ELF's base town in Sudan. Othman Sabbe, in speaking of the need to reimpose unity within the ELF, has called for a struggle against the General Command: 'They must be wiped out, not physically, but scientifically and theoretically'.

It is impossible at this stage for outside observers to estimate the relative strengths of these two groups or the accuracy of their different statements about each other. However, it is known that the split *does* represent a division between the political leadership and local military commanders, and that the Inter-Ba'thi rivalry between Syria and Iraq is reflected in the competing support given by these two states to the Popular Revolutionary Forces and the General Command respectively. The majority of the Palestine resistance, and certainly al-Fath, give arms and training support to the PRF, but both appear to be getting aid from abroad.

The internationalism of the ELF is related to the question of whether a Marxist cadre can develop within the movement. At the moment the ideology of the ELF is nationalist, and so are nearly all its members: the 'Muslims' are Nasserites or supporters of right-wing Muslim ideologies, while many of the Christians still appeal to the west to back Eritrean self-determination. On the other hand, the ELF has come face-to-face with us imperialism in Ethiopia and an increasing number of its cadres have been trained in China and Cuba. The influence of Mao's thought, in the form of the *Quotations* at least, is growing, because the book is used for political education and because it provides guidance on the everyday questions involved in fighting a guerrilla war. The Marxist cadres within the ELF are still in a minority, but the political options of the Front can be resolved through a growth in their influence. A similar transition from nationalism to Marxism-Leninism has taken place within the liberation movement in Dhofar, while a development along such lines in the Palestinian resistance has been arrested.



## The Threat to Imperialism

However, the threat which the ELF poses to imperialism is immense, whatever the internal evolution of its policies. It has been the custom for years for European writers to predict the imminent downfall of Haile Selassie, and he is still there; at 78 he may not live much longer, but he is backed by a relatively coherent Amhara ruling class and the régime he embodies may well survive him for a time. Nevertheless, the ELF is clearly posing a great military, political and financial threat to the Ethiopian régime and to all that it signifies for imperialist interests in the continent.

America and Israel are now co-operating on building up the Ethiopian army, both to crush the ELF and to ensure the flow of shipping in the Red Sea. Israeli instructors and counter-insurgency experts are active in Eritrea; the us are training the Ethiopian air force and constructing naval installations along the Red Sea coast. This fits into the wider American strategy in the Indian Ocean. In December 1970 the us announced plans to build a \$19 million communications base on the island of Diego Garcia, south of India, to monitor shipping and serve as a possible staging post for moving us troops into areas threatened by guerrilla war. Nearer Eritrea, the British are engaged in fighting the people of Oman and in trying to rig up a neo-colonial Federation in the Persian Gulf. The British are also revitalizing their relations with the South African government. These separate instances form part of a concerted Anglo-American attempt to consolidate their position in the countries around the Indian Ocean, from Ceylon to South Africa. The war in Eritrea poses a direct threat to these interests.

*Fred Halliday*

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## *Jürgen Habermas: A New Eclecticism*

Jürgen Habermas is at present the most celebrated of the successors of the Frankfurt School and the only one as yet well-known outside the Federal German Republic. In an article in NLR 63, I discussed the work of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, the original nucleus of the Frankfurt School. The younger successors of the School were referred to, but not discussed, for two reasons. First, that the older three were of the same generation and had much the same historical experience in common, and second that, until the last few years at least, despite fundamental political differences, the original members remained true to their Marxist origins philosophically. This article is an attempt to analyse Habermas's thought, and its development away from the Marxist positions of the founders of the School. It is important to analyse Habermas's ideas, because they are particularly attractive to reformist sociologists attempting to erect a 'critical' sociology in opposition to the conservative

orthodoxy in that discipline.

Appropriately enough, Habermas's inaugural lecture as Professor of Philosophy and Sociology in Frankfurt is the key text in establishing the origins of his position in Horkheimer's ideas, but also the divergences which have supervened in the interval since Horkheimer originally formulated them. Entitled *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Cognition and Interest),<sup>1</sup> this lecture invites comparison with the crucial statement of the classical Frankfurt School, Horkheimer's *Traditional and Critical Theory*,<sup>2</sup> for Habermas claims that the latter article 'underlies' his lecture (rwl, p. 147n.). However, classical critical theory is hardly discussed in the lecture, and it would be impossible to discern what the former was about from it. Horkheimer regarded critical theory as Marxism, albeit a very special interpretation of Marxism. In Habermas's text, Marx and Engels are not even hinted at (with the exception of a negative reference to Soviet Marxism). Instead, the points of reference are Greek philosophy, Schelling, Husserl and Adorno's critique of him, and contemporary hermeneutic philosophers such as Apel and Gadamer. With Horkheimer, critical theory was socially anchored in the revolutionary proletariat. In Habermas's academic oration there is no room for any workers, still less for a revolutionary proletariat. The 'emancipatory interest' (to use a term of Habermas's) which guided Horkheimer and which he regarded as the 'only concern' of the critical theorist, was 'to accelerate a development which should lead to a society without exploitation'. It was clear from the context that this development was the proletarian socialist revolution. Habermas's interest in emancipation produces merely 'self-reflection' (rwl, p. 159).

Habermas's project is epistemology, *Erkenntnistheorie*, the theory of the conditions of possible knowledge. Habermas argues that since the middle of the 19th century, theories of knowledge have been replaced by theories of science. The frame of reference is no longer the knowing subject, but rather systems of scientific propositions and procedures. Habermas's aim is to bridge the gap between the traditions of *Erkenntnistheorie* and *Erkenntniskritik* (i.e. critique of knowledge).<sup>3</sup> He concludes that 'ultimately a radicalized critique of knowledge can only be carried out in the form of a reconstruction of the history of the species' (EL, pp. 84ff.). This argument is based on the Hegelian notion of the history of the species as a *Bildungsprozess*, a process of formation or education, in which the species constitutes itself. The link between the philosophy of history and the theory of knowledge is provided by the concept of 'interest', or to be exact 'knowledge-guilding interest'

<sup>1</sup> This lecture should not be confused with the book *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt 1968). Hereafter the latter will be referred to as EL. The former is included in a collection of essays by Habermas entitled *Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'* (Technique and Science as 'Ideology'—Frankfurt 1968), pp. 146–68. This volume is hereafter referred to as rwl. Three essays from rwl have been translated in Jürgen Habermas: *Towards a Rational Society* (London 1971), hereafter referred to as trs.

<sup>2</sup> Max Horkheimer: 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie', in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, Heft 2, 1937. Cf. NLA 63, pp. 67–74.

<sup>3</sup> See above all H and his overview in 'Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften' (On the Logic of the Social Sciences), *Philosophische Rundschau* 1967, Beiheft 5. For a Marxist position on this issue in direct opposition to that of Habermas, see Louis Althusser: *For Marx* (London 1970).

(*erkenntnisleitendes Interesse*—EI, p. 243). 'I call *interests* the basic orientations which are responsible for determinate fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species' (EI, p. 242). These interests determine the 'conditions of possible objectivity' for the various sciences (in the broad sense of the word *Wissenschaft*—RWI, p. 160).

Habermas distinguishes between three of these 'knowledge-guiding interests': 1. technical—'adaptation to technical dispositions'; 2. practical—'adaptation to the arrangements of practical life'; and 3. emancipatory—orientated to 'emancipation from naturalistic constraint'. They correspond to or guide three types of sciences: the empirical-analytical, the historical-hermeneutic and the critical sciences, respectively. These interests, and the sciences they guide, develop in the three 'media' in which the social life of the human species unfolds: work, language and domination (*Herrschaft*—RWI, pp. 155ff.): 'This viewpoint (i.e., one from which we necessarily conceive reality as transcendental) derives from the complex of interests of a species, which is bound up from the beginning with determinate media of socialization: with labour, language and domination. The human species ensures its survival in systems of social labour and coercive self-assertion; by a traditionally mediated common life in colloquial linguistic communication; and finally with the assistance of ego-identities which reinforce the consciousness of the individuals in relation to the norms of the group at every stage of individualization. Thus the knowledge-guiding interests are responsible for the functions of an ego which adapts itself to its external life conditions in learning processes; which is trained by formative processes in the communications complex of a social environment; and which constructs an identity in the conflict between instinctual demands and social constraints' (RWI, pp. 162ff.).

The critical sciences naturally have a special place in this triple trinity of interests, media and sciences. Its medium anchorage, i.e. 'domination', is at first sight rather unclear. The term *Herrschaft* (surprisingly, perhaps) includes socio-psychological processes of role-learning and personality formation. In Hegel's 'dialectic of morality' (*Sittlichkeit*), these functions are fulfilled by the family.<sup>4</sup> In later formulations, Habermas himself has subsumed them—together with the symbolic sphere—under the concept of 'interaction'.<sup>4</sup> He then conceptualizes Domination as 'distorted communication', deriving this concept from Freud.<sup>5</sup> In other words, critical sciences and emancipatory interest are linked to social action in the sense of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, i.e. to conduct oriented to expectations of how *alter* will react to *ego's* action.<sup>6</sup> We can now understand the task of Habermas's critique:

<sup>4</sup> See the essay 'Arbeit und Interaktion: Bemerkungen zu Hegels Jenaer "Philosophie des Geistes"' (Labour and Interaction: Notes on Hegel's Jena 'Philosophy of Mind') in RWI, pp. 9–47.

<sup>5</sup> III, pp. 341ff, and 'Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence', in Hans Peter Dreitzel, ed., *Recent Sociology Number Two*, London 1970, pp. 114–148. The latter is referred to hereafter as *TRCC*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen 1925), Vol. 1 pp. 1ff., and Talcott Parsons et al.: *Towards a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge Mass. 1951).

'The systematic *sciences of action*, i.e. economics, sociology and political science, have the aim of producing nomological knowledge, like the empirical sciences. Of course, critical social science has no complaints about this. However, it is concerned to see beyond this whether theoretical statements express invariant regularities of social action, or whether they express ideologically frozen, but in principle transformable relations of dependence.' Its basic assumption can be summed up like this: 'In so far as this is true, the *critique of ideology*, just like *psycho-analysis*, reckons with the fact that information about the complexes of laws governing consciousness can itself initiate a process of reflection in them; for this reason it is possible to transform the stages of unreflected consciousness which are part of the initial conditions of such laws. . . . The methodological framework which established the validity of this category of critical statements lacks the concept of *self-reflection*. The latter disengages the subject from dependence on hypostasized forces. Self-reflection is determined by an emancipatory knowledge-interest. The critically orientated sciences share it with philosophy' (rwi, pp. 158ff.). Habermas's chosen method is then immanent critique: 'The power of critical sociology lies in its remembrance of the original intentions behind the current goals of today and what has actually been established. It takes the pretensions of the existing arrangements at their word, for even where these words are utopian, they determine, realistically conceived, what the existing is *not*.'<sup>7</sup> Thus the psycho-analytic situation is supposed to exemplify the critical process (KI, chs. 10-12).

Horkheimer's ideas have clearly been drastically revised in this programme. Horkheimer saw the dividing line between traditional and critical theory essentially in sociological terms: his criterion was whether the theory assisted the reproduction of society or subverted it. Habermas's criterion is ontological, linked to a speculative conception of man derived from Hegel's Jena lectures (see rwi, pp. 9-47). Classical critical theory was sociologically determined in a second sense—however thin and fragile the actual bonds may have been, it was linked to a definite social force, the working class. Habermas's theory is linked only to his own view of the 'functions' of the human ego. This is more clearly formulated in another article: 'Reflection must go further back than any historically determined class interest and lay bare the complex of interests of a self-constituting species as such' (rwi, p. 91; TBS, p. 113). However, despite these fundamental changes, whose effects I shall analyse in more detail below, much in Habermas's thought derives from or is held in common with the ideas of the classical Frankfurt School. The hermeneutic orientation and emphasis on intersubjectivity which he shares with Horkheimer, Adorno, and even Marcuse, obliterates the line of demarcation between scientific theory and everyday intersubjective understanding within a linguistic-cultural community. This obliteration is a precondition for the contention that the criticism and supersession of a scientific theory or an allegedly scientific discourse can be reduced to a process of *Ideologiekritik* or

<sup>7</sup> J. Habermas: 'Kritische und konservative Aufgaben der Soziologie' (Critical and Conservative Tasks of Sociology) in his collection of articles *Theory and Praxis* (Theory and Praxis—Neuwied and Berlin, and ed. 1967), pp. 215-30, especially p. 229. This book is hereafter referred to as TP.

criticism of ideology. Much as with the older generation of Frankfurt School theorists, the errors this gives rise to emerge most clearly in the consequent interpretation of Marx and Freud, and attempt to reconcile the two.

### Marx and Freud

Many readings and interpretations have been made of Freud. Two are found in Habermas's work. One of these is hermeneutic; it starts from the clinical situation, the dialogue between the analyst and the analysand, and sees the therapy as a process of self-reflection both for analyst and analysand. The second is critical; it focuses on Freud's meta-psychological works, his books on culture, and the idea of human cultural development as the repression of human instincts.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever value these interpretations may have in a general cultural debate, they have no place in a discussion of the theory of science, but that is the context in which Habermas introduces them. They obscure all that makes Freud more than a conversational therapist and cultural philosopher, indeed, they obscure all that gives 'hermeneutic' or 'cultural' philosophers reason to turn to Freud for epistemological arguments. These interpretations exemplify what the great French epistemologist Gaston Bachelard denounced as the parasitic utilization of science by philosophers for their own purposes.<sup>9</sup>

In Habermas's interpretation, the centre of psycho-analysis is a theory of linguistic failure, of systematically distorted communication—examples being dreams, everyday slips of the tongue, neurotic and psychotic symptoms, and also 'the hidden pathology of collective behaviour and entire social systems' (TRCC, pp. 117–18). As distorted communication, the neurotic symptom is characterized by the use of deviant linguistic rules, compulsive repetition, and discrepancy between levels of communication, all of which add up to the adoption of a private language on the part of the sufferer. This results from a childhood inability to resolve some conflict, the object of which the child and adult exclude from public communication by desymbolization and symptom formation. In the transference relationship between analyst and analysand, these primal scenes are recreated, and their re-enactment enables the analysand to reflect on the symptom, to understand its aetiology, and thus to restore the primal object of conflict to the status of a public utterance.

This might appear to be close to Lacan's reading of Freud, which shares its stress on the linguistic element of psycho-analysis, and sees the aim of the cure as the transformation of an 'empty speech' into a 'full speech'. But this apparent resemblance is only superficial. For Habermas, unconscious processes are only necessary to explain pathological pseudo-communication (significantly, he refers to Freud's later topography of id, ego and super-ego, rather than to the un-

<sup>8</sup> Habermas's interpretation of Freud is keyed to the former interpretation, but contains both. See below and XI, chs. 10–12 and TRCC.

<sup>9</sup> This theme is central to Bachelard's whole work. Cf. Dominique Lecourt: *L'épistémologie historique de Gaston Bachelard* (Paris 1969).

conscious and conscious), whereas normal social communication is self-explanatory; inter-subjectivity is self-evident. Moreover, this normal and desirable transparency is extended to social systems as well, which are to be 'socio-analysed' by the critical social scientist. In Lacan's reading, on the contrary, the unconscious is precisely what the pathological and the normal have in common: it is omni-present (and omni-absent). Furthermore, the unconscious does not just underly the notions of everyday experience, conveniently explaining them. It is a scientific concept, and its discovery therefore entails the transformation of the notions of everyday life into concepts of the theory of psycho-analysis. Such is the case, for example, with one of the most central concepts of psycho-analysis, that of sexuality. A great step in the constitution of psycho-analysis as a science consisted precisely in the elaboration of a radically new definition of sexuality.<sup>10</sup>

Thus Habermas's recourse to Freud is an attempt to explain away phenomena like neurotic symptoms which do not fit into the schema of the transparency of inter-subjective communication, and then to use the notion of distorted communication to criticize and reform social systems so that their 'unconscious' aspects can be eradicated. Nothing could be further from a scientific reading of Freud.

The implications of Habermas's programme for the critical social sciences are perhaps even clearer when we turn to Marx. Habermas reduces Marx to a critic of ideology: 'According to Marx, the critique of political economy was simply a theory of bourgeois society as a critique of its ideology. But when the ideology of fair exchange collapses, the system of domination, too, can no longer be immediately criticized according to the relations of production' (RWI, p. 76; TAS, p. 101). Marx, however, did not content himself with 'criticizing' bourgeois ideology, i.e. with demonstrating the contrast between its assumptions and reality. *Capital* is not an immanent critique of liberalism—if it were it would be of little interest today. It is a work in which a new science is founded, a science of society and of history. In it Marx constructs a new concept of the economy, not as an effect of human 'propensities'—whether Smith's 'propensity to trade, truck and barter' or Keynes's propensity to consume—but as a 'region' in a complex social structure, defined by the concepts of forces and relations of production.<sup>11</sup>

It is noteworthy that Marx in Habermas's interpretation, not to speak of Habermas's own brand of critical theory, represent basically the same type of critique of capitalism as those Marx and Engels found and attacked in the utopian socialists, Proudhon, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen.<sup>12</sup> The latter had criticized bourgeois society from the point of view of its own ideals and had formed their utopias along the same lines. Marx and Engels showed that the bourgeois ideals—liberal

<sup>10</sup> See Sigmund Freud: 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', *Standard Edition* Vol. VII (London 1953), and Etienne Balibar: 'On the Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism' in Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar; *Reading Capital* (London 1970), pp. 243–7.

<sup>11</sup> See Louis Althusser: 'The Object of *Capital*', in Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar; *Reading Capital*, op. cit., pp. 182–93.

<sup>12</sup> See Karl Marx: *The Poverty of Philosophy* and Friedrich Engels: *Anti-Dühring*.



conceptions of justice and freedom—were not fundamentally in contradiction with bourgeois society's real mode of functioning, but on the contrary were an expression of it. An immanent critique, like Fourier's, was capable of revealing the hypocrisy of most bourgeois ideologists. The scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, however, pointed to the necessity for another *goal* of socialism than that of the utopians—not Proudhon's society of fair exchange, but the transitional dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. It also showed other *preconditions* of socialism—structural conflicts between the forces and relations of production—in the capitalist economy. Thirdly, scientific socialism indicated new *means*: the class struggle, the revolutionary party, and the proletarian revolution.

Freud and Marx did not linger on the established terrains of psychological and economic discourse as 'critics'. They showed the sterility of those terrains, abandoned them and opened up new ones. So our task today is not to be the critical conscience of bourgeois social thought, but to *break* with it; it is not to construct 'critical social sciences' peacefully and parasitically co-existing with the traditional ideological output, but to reject the alleged scientificity of the latter and to set out upon the path of true science cleared by Marx.<sup>13</sup>

### Labour and Interaction

Thus far my criticisms could be applied with equal force to the writings of Horkheimer or Adorno. But it is clear that Habermas's departure from Marxism is far more radical than that of his forebears. The life-line to classical Marxism carefully maintained by the founders of the Frankfurt School, even in its wildest adventures, has been decisively cut by Habermas. I shall discuss the reasons for this break below. For the moment I shall concentrate on its result for his own position: Habermas has been forced to construct an alternative system of his own. I will now turn to this new system as such.

Habermas rejects the concepts of the productive forces and relations of production, substituting for them the notions of labour and interaction. The explicit motivation for this substitution is that the latter are more general, whereas the former are bound to assumptions about liberal capitalism which no longer hold (TWT, p. 92; TRS, p. 113). This explicit revision in fact stems from a more basic one which turns Marx's scientific innovation into a philosophy of history modelled on Hegel's dialectic of morality (*Sittlichkeit*—see III, chs. 2–3).

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the aim of the attack on bourgeois ideology is not to point out 'ideologically frozen but in principle transformable relations of dependence', but rather to reveal patterns of determinism beneath a voluntarist ideology. The bourgeois State is an objective structure of Capitalist society which can be abolished only when class society is abolished, and it is neither a neutral tool in the hands of the parliamentary majority nor anything merely 'ideologically frozen'. The same is true of imperialism. It should perhaps be added that the necessary shift in terrain for Marxists concerns the basic theoretical problematic, not a simple disregard for what is produced by academic social research, much of which is valuable in one respect or another, and that the path of a scientific study of society will therefore be one of constant struggle with academic sociology.

For Marxism, which is an historical and social science of modes of production, the productive forces and relations of production denote objective economic structures. The level of the former constitutes the technical-organizational pattern of production as exemplified in handicrafts, machine industry, process industry, different facilities of communication, and so on. The relations of production refer neither to juridical property nor to actual disposal (in neither of these senses could capital be said to constitute a relation of production). They refer to the mode—specific to every mode of production—in which surplus-labour is extracted from the immediate producers. They determine the relation between the latter and those who expropriate their surplus-labour—between the slave and the slave-owner or between the wage-earner and the capitalist, for instance. They determine the aim of production—for consumption, for sale on a market, for profit. They determine the context of the immediate work situation—whether independent, as in the tribute-duty village, or tightly controlled by the capitalist and his subordinates, and the relation between necessary and surplus-labour—separate or fused.<sup>14</sup>

Such concepts are of little use to the philosopher of history bent on constructing a philosophy of the self-constitution of the human species.<sup>15</sup> Habermas clings to the concepts of Marx's early manuscripts and develops the notion of the self-realization of the human species in labour, and of labour as a materialist synthesis of man and nature.<sup>16</sup> In the language of modern sociology, the sub-system of labour covers all rational instrumental ( *Zweckrational*) action. It is within this general sub-system that factors of production (Habermas's notion of Marx's productive forces) have developed. But here a difficulty arises for such a philosophy of history. If, as Marx implies, the relations of production are also an economic concept, then all human activity is restricted to labour, i.e. to instrumental action. So Marx must be wrong. For while he included the relations of production within the mode of production, he also noted the existence of an *institutional*

<sup>14</sup> Among the key references for these concepts are *Capital* Vol. I, chs. 7 and 12–15, and Vol. III, chs. 47, 48 and 51. Two starting-points are provided by the distinctions in Vol. I, ch. 7 between the labour process and the process of producing value, which is spelt out in chs. 12–15; and by the definition of the *differentia specifica* of a mode of production in Vol. III, ch. 47, on the genesis of ground rent. The crucial text of interpretation is Etienne Balibar: 'On the Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism', op. cit. I have myself tried to elaborate this interpretation to some extent, but more particularly to apply it in a critique of various ideologies of economic systems: *Vetenskap och ideologi om ekonomiska system* (The Science and Ideology of Economic Systems—to be published). Marx's analysis showed that the industrial labour process, in contrast to handicraft production, entails an objective, technical subjugation of the labourer. Hence Marx did not believe in any 'neutrality' of technology. In my article in *MLA* 63 I carelessly implied that Marcuse's original notion that technology was 'neutral' was Marxist, even though this is contradicted in the analysis later in the same text. In fact, Marcuse's substitution of an existential judgement on the all-pervasive technological apparatus for a belief in the neutrality of technology cannot be said to involve a regression on his part, perhaps rather the reverse. Neither, however, takes us very far as a social analysis.

<sup>15</sup> Hence Habermas's attack on Marx in *III*. Habermas's philosophy of labour and interaction is developed in *rw1*, pp. 9–103.

<sup>16</sup> As it derives its concept of the economy from anthropological assumptions, this view is, of course, fundamentally akin to the 'propensity' philosophy of bourgeois economics from Adam Smith via the Marginalists to the Keynesians.

*framework* for the labour process, the rule of one class over another, and a kind of 'communicative activity' in the class struggle. These concepts arose in his material investigations. The contradiction thus implied between Marx's concepts and his theoretical conclusions Habermas attributes to his epistemological misconception of historical materialism as a natural science rather than as a *critique*. Habermas replaces the concept of the relations of production with a new term designating the 'institutional framework of society'—the notion of 'symbolically mediated interaction'.<sup>17</sup>

It is obvious that this double revision—of a scientific theory into a speculative 'species history', and of two key Marxist concepts—does considerable violence to the author of *Das Kapital*. What else can be said of it in a limited space?<sup>18</sup> A first result of Habermas's operation is to rob any serious analysis of society of important tools. As far as social analysis is concerned, Habermas's substitution of 'interaction' for the 'relations of production' simply emphasizes the importance of norms, cultural tradition and symbolic communication. These correspond to the ideological system every society contains, of which Marx was well aware, though he never wrote a counterpart to *Capital* on it. Marx was also aware of another non-economic structure, to the analysis of which he made an important though fragmentary contribution—the political-legal structure of the State. In Habermas's schema, by contrast, the State is divided between the sub-systems of labour on the one hand and interaction and relations of communication on the other.

The disappearance of the concept of the relations of production also abolishes relationships which determine human behaviour without being norms (or technical rules), although they may function *via* normative sanctions. No norm in our capitalist society says that the population should be divided into two basic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but this is the most fundamental of all aspects of the institutional framework of life in capitalist society, patterning the 'free choice of occupation' and the mechanisms of distribution. Managerial ideologies ask us to believe that salaried managers are governed by other norms than the old entrepreneurs, and this may be true, but it naturally in no way proves that the capitalist economy has disappeared. The relations of production have not changed.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, the concept of the productive forces highlights the complex material structure of the labour process—the relation between the labourer, the means and the object of labour—and its central importance for the variant forms of social domination.<sup>20</sup> This is lost in the notion of labour as instrumental behaviour, as problem-solving. Whereas in a Marxist analysis the contradiction between the productive forces and

<sup>17</sup> Habermas has summarized his schema diagrammatically in *rw1*, p. 64; *trs*, p. 95.

<sup>18</sup> See the more elaborate, but somewhat different criticism of Renate Dams: 'Habermas und der "heimliche Positivismus" bei Marx', in *Sexualistische Politik* no. 4, December 1969.

<sup>19</sup> There is a counterpart to this in ethnology where kinship is concerned. The norms of a society may say that A must marry B and C, D. But they do not present the network of kinship relations within a whole tribe or group of tribes which can be shown by ethnological analysis to govern those norms.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Capital* Vol. 1, chs. 7, 14 and 15.

the relations of production provides an important tool with which to reveal the functions of the State's economic intervention behind its screen of reformist ideology, Habermas gives us no tools of analysis—just two assertions: that State intervention is important and effective, and that science and technology help to legitimize domination.

In contrast to the relationship between the productive forces and the relations of production, the scheme of 'labour' and 'interaction' can circumscribe no structural contradictions. Habermas ignores the mode of extraction of surplus-labour as the *differentia specifica* of a mode of production and as what determines in the last instance the basic character and importance of the economic, political and ideological structures of society. In its place he puts . . . the type of legitimizing ideology! (rwl, pp. 65ff; rrs, pp. 94ff.)

### Hegel and Parsons

The schema Habermas has substituted for the Marxist theory of the social formation is a *mélange* derived essentially from two sources. The first of these is Hegel's Jena writings of 1803–6 (see rwl, pp. 9–47). In these early writings, Hegel argued that the Spirit is an organization of three equally original means or instruments: languages, the tool and family property. Language refers not to linguistic communication, but to naming and memory, i.e. to the ego's distanciation from its surrounding world. With the tool, the ego submits to the laws of nature the better to master it. In the family, the ego achieves recognition in the struggle and reconciliation with other men by a process of education or socialization. For Habermas the last two are essential, and he has renamed them labour and interaction.<sup>21</sup> In labour, man confronts nature in instrumental action; in interaction, he confronts society in normative behaviour (*Stittlichkeit*). The later Hegel, according to Habermas, obscured this distinction by conceiving nature—the Spirit's primary alienation—as another subject, thus assimilating the struggle of ego against nature with that of ego against alter. Marx, although as a young man he restored the distinction (in the 1844 *Manuscripts*), then later assimilated ego's struggle against alter with its struggle against nature by asserting that the relations of production were a part of the mode of production, i.e. part of the material process of production, rather than a non-material instance in the social whole. He thereby rejoined the late Hegel.

The second source is modern bourgeois sociology, in particular the work of Talcott Parsons. As I remarked in my earlier article (NLA 63, p. 74), one of classical sociology's main concerns was the distinction between traditional and industrial society, conceived in terms of some form of *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* opposition. Habermas discusses this, and also Parsons' formalization of it into a general theory of social systems (the pairs of value-orientations: affectivity/affective neutrality, particularism/universalism, ascription/achievement and diffuseness/specificity). He attacks Parsons for de-historicizing these concepts,

<sup>21</sup> Language provides a faculty for the other two, and in Habermas's later writings it seems to be included in interaction. In rroc, for instance, Chomsky is attacked for not acknowledging how much of language arises only in inter-subjective communication (rroc, pp. 130–138).

treating the features of a particular transition as universally valid (TWL, pp. 61–62; TRS, p. 91). But Habermas himself is still very close to Parsons, in two respects. First, Habermas's critique of Marx *vis-à-vis* the relation between instrumental activity and the normative institutional framework in which it is embedded is very similar to Parsons's critique of utilitarianism and his theory of action.<sup>22</sup> (Of course, Parsons was not simply concerned with instrumental activity, but with behaviour based on individual self-interest and the impossibility of deriving a satisfactory concept of society from such behaviour alone. Parsons pointed to the framework of social values and norms over and above individual self-interest and traced the emergence of a theory of action orientated towards these norms in the works of Marshall, Pareto, Durkheim and Weber.) Secondly, the labour/interaction couple, or put more formally, the opposition between the system of instrumental-teleological action and the institutional framework of symbolically mediated interaction (TWL, p. 64; TRS, p. 93), has only to be reduplicated to become very close to the four-functional pattern of Parsons' later work—with adaptation and goal-attainment in the first of Habermas's sub-systems, and pattern-maintenance and integration in the second. Habermas even largely allocates the modern State and economy to the first sub-system and the family and culture to the second, exactly as does Parsons, and his scheme of social development from primitive through traditional to modern industrial societies is essentially a differentiation process, as it is for Parsons.

### The Actiology of Habermas

We are now faced with the obvious paradox—the problem of the actiology of Habermas's ideas. How did the Frankfurt School, which could at the very least lay claim to intellectual rigour and seriousness, give rise to this extraordinary amalgam of the Young Hegel and Talcott Parsons? In fact, on closer inspection, this paradox can be seen to disappear. Habermas's ideas are indeed what someone of his generation formed in the German Federal Republic might be expected to make of some of the more extreme ideas of the elder members of the School.

As I showed in my earlier article, the classical Frankfurt School preserved Marx's critique of the evils of capitalist society, but grew increasingly sceptical about the remedies he proposed for those evils: the proletarian revolution and the release of the productive forces it would bring about. But this scepticism did not lead them to a renunciation of Marxist theory or to a reconciliation with capitalism, but rather to a hyper-radicalization of their ideological and political stance and a retreat from any political practice into philosophy and aesthetics. The most striking example of this pessimism-cum-radicalism appears in Horkheimer's and Adorno's discussion of science and technology, which had generally been treated as progressive and revolutionary in the Marxist tradition, but which the Frankfurt School increasingly saw as the direct cause and justification for social oppression. This position is outlined in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, by Horkheimer and Adorno, and in Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Talcott Parsons: *The Structure of Social Action* (Cambridge Mass. 1937).

<sup>23</sup> See NLR 63, pp. 82–83, and 88–89.

It was this position of the older generation of the Frankfurt School that Habermas inherited. He ends his study of Marxism in the 1950's (1957) with a quotation from a lecture on Freud given by Marcuse in Frankfurt in 1956, a quotation which contains the germ of the thesis of *One-Dimensional Man* (TP, pp. 334ff). A decade later, he was to formulate Marcuse's 'basic thesis' as follows: 'In the advanced industrial countries, technology and science have not only become the primary productive force, laying the basis for a peaceful and satisfying existence, but also a new form of ideology, legitimizing an administrative coercion cut off from the masses'.<sup>24</sup> Marcuse's 'our political conclusion from these premisses was quoted in my earlier article: "Thought in contradiction must become more negative and more utopian in opposition to the status quo. This seems to me to be the imperative of the current situation in relation to my theoretical essays of the 1930's."<sup>25</sup> Habermas draws very different conclusions. Since technology and science have become the 'primary productive force' and 'scientific-technical progress has become an autonomous source of surplus-value' (RWI, pp. 79ff; TRS, pp. 104ff; TP, pp. 190ff), the labour theory of value must be *revised*.<sup>26</sup> Because a technocratic ideology linked to State economic intervention has replaced the ideology of equal exchange as the legitimation of bourgeois society, the critique of political economy is no longer a sufficient *ideologiekritische* theory of society (RWI, pp. 74ff; TRS pp. 100ff). The technocratic system of economic regulation and political manipulation has substituted any clearly definable class rule and, on the basis of institutionalized scientific-technical progress, has created loyalties which cross social boundaries so that class contradictions have become latent. Marx's theory of class struggle is thus no longer unconditionally applicable in advanced capitalist societies, and must also be revised (RWI, pp. 84ff; TRS, pp. 107ff).<sup>27</sup> In a comment directed explicitly at Ernst Bloch, but clearly extendable to the older members of the Frankfurt School, Habermas attacks their 'tacit orthodoxy' in which 'a kind of long repressed echo of a critique of political economy still remains in the esoteric ghost of aesthetic reflection' (TP, p. 170).<sup>28</sup> *Horkheimer's and Adorno's post-war individualistic retreat from concrete political and economic problems preserved critical theory as*

<sup>24</sup> J. Habermas, ed.: *Antwort auf Herbert Marcuse* (Frankfurt 1968), pp. 14ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Negations* (New York and London 1969), p. xx.

<sup>26</sup> RWI, pp. 79ff. and TP, pp. 190ff. Though related to a real problem—the importance of changes in productivity for the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—Habermas's critique merely echoes the Gotha programme. It is based on a naive, empiricist reading of the theory of value, allegedly calculated 'on the basis of the value of unskilled (simple) labour-power' (RWI, p. 80). See W. Müller: 'Habermas und die Anwendbarkeit der Arbeitswerttheorie' (Habermas and the Applicability of the Labour Theory of Value), *Sozialistische Politik* No. 1, April 1969. Cf. also Charles Bettelheim's critique of empiricist conceptions of the labour theory of value in the Eastern European price debate, *La transition vers l'économie socialiste* (Paris 1968) ch. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Habermas's arguments in his denunciation of the student movement in spring 1968: 'Die Scheinrevolution und ihre Kinder' (The Pseudo-Revolution and its Children) in *Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas* (The Left Replies to Jürgen Habermas) (Frankfurt 1968), pp. 5–15.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. TP, pp. 40ff, Habermas's Introduction to *Antwort auf Herbert Marcuse*, op. cit., p. 12, and his contribution to the memorial volume on Adorno: 'Ein philosophierender Intellektueller' (A Philosophizing Intellectual), *über Theodor W. Adorno* (Frankfurt 1968), pp. 35–43.

*a pure theory retaining a kind of philosophico-aesthetic shadow-life. Habermas has turned this relationship on to its head: the theory now has to be revised to restore its relevance to concrete social problems.*

It is hardly surprising that Habermas has taken this step. Born in 1929, he belongs to that generation of intellectuals who were formed politically by the Cold-War debates of the 1950's about 'stabilized capitalism', Stalinism and Marx's Early Works. Habermas intervened in this situation by defining Marxism as a 'critique' somewhere between a philosophy and a science: 'Marxist theory is distinguished by its position "between" philosophy and positive science' (TP, p. 179). From this standpoint, he verbally defended Marxism against the eclectic rapaciousness of the academic sociology of Mannheim, Friedmann and Dahrendorf. On the other hand, he accepted that it was, like a science, subject to empirical falsification: 'We can expressly state that its structure is that of a philosophy of history conceived for political purposes, and therefore scientifically falsifiable, without shunning the opportunity afforded a later generation to understand Marx better than he understood himself' (TP, p. 179). As a result, he was vulnerable to the then fashionable 'refutations' of the labour theory of value, of the theory of class struggle, of the theory of base and superstructure. 'Four facts' here speak against Marx, according to Habermas, '1. State intervention in the economy means that the latter is no longer autonomous, State and society can no longer be regarded as base and superstructure. 2. The rise in the standard of living even of "broad strata of the population" means that an interest in social emancipation can no longer be articulated in immediate economic forms. 3. In these conditions, the proletariat has dissolved as a proletariat (in the sense of critical theory): exclusion from disposal of the means of production is no longer linked to such a loss of income, security and education that it must lead to class consciousness. 4. Marxism has come to play a role as the State ideology of the authoritarian régime in the Soviet Union' (TP, pp. 162-65; for other 'refutations', see TP, pp. 188-200 and RWI). These 'facts' are all familiar from the revisionism of the 1950's and need no rebuttal for readers of *New Left Review*. Suffice it to note that Habermas goes so far as to rely on Strachey's *Contemporary Capitalism* and his purely Social-Democratic notion of bourgeois State intervention in the economy as an 'economic consequence of democracy'—an idea that belongs to a different universe from that of the Frankfurt School (TP, p. 197).

### The Politics of Communication

So far, I have outlined Habermas's basic problematic and discussed its aetiology. Two things remain to be considered; two things which are in fact one and the same—the political position that follows from that problematic, and the vogue for Habermas among young academics in the fields of sociology and social philosophy.

Habermas's stress on the moment of 'interaction' in the social totality, and its separation from the world of economic production, lead him to locate political problems in a world of ideas far from the class struggle and its brutal materiality (though the latter can be invoked

as a warning against too militant positions and actions). Habermas reformulates the goal of social emancipation in terms of communication, as 'communication free of domination' and 'a general and unforced consensus' (RWI, pp. 64, 163; TRS, p. 93). The result is an extreme idealistic vagueness; Habermas's ideas are very different from those of the classical Frankfurt School, where emancipation was viewed in more substantial economico-political and erotic terms (later also in terms of a distinctive mystique of nature). But communicative relations are also the object of a large-scale historical study by Habermas of the changes in bourgeois *Öffentlichkeit* (an untranslatable German term meaning something between 'public opinion' and the 'public domain').<sup>29</sup> Characteristically, there is no discussion of a proletarian *Öffentlichkeit*, and even the Paris Commune and the councils movement are related only to a physiocratic insight into the natural order!<sup>30</sup> The study's conclusion is a conception of liberal pluralism emphasizing free communication within the dominant organizations as the solution to modern problems of public opinion. Thus the book is an excellent illustration of the political effects of an immanent critique of bourgeois ideology. In Habermas's conception, the State appears primarily as the effective stabilizer of the capitalist economy. As we have seen, this is a central feature of his view of advanced capitalism. He has no political concept of the State, however. In his theory of *Öffentlichkeit*, the State is thus subsumed under the concept of *Herrschaft* or domination, idealistically interpreted. Domination is reduced to the ideologies by which it is legitimized (RWI, p. 163). Habermas also discusses domination in terms of 'distorted communication' (EI, pp. 341ff. and TRCC). On the other hand, in a different context Habermas freely warns against the potential violence of the State—in order to advise student activists to refrain from violence of their own.<sup>31</sup>

The 'conflict zone' is no longer that of class antagonisms. It has become that of *Öffentlichkeit*, and turns on the masking or unmasking of the difference between progress or rationalization in the instrumental sphere and emancipation in the institutional framework. Protest in this sense originates from groups of students, and in the future Habermas sees a 'system problem' which, if sensitized, would make this protest into a political force: the quantity of social wealth produced under automated conditions will make it increasingly difficult to tie status assignment convincingly to individual prestation (RWI, pp. 100-3; TRS, pp. 120-2). This 'system problem' is, of course, a faint idealist and individualist echo of the contradiction between the social character of the productive forces and the private character of the relations of produc-

<sup>29</sup> *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied and Berlin 1962).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 156. This shows how little Habermas has understood the Marxist theory of the State.

<sup>31</sup> 'Die Scheinrevolution und ihre Kinder', op. cit. Habermas has twice denounced the militancy of the student movement on crucial occasions. The one I have referred to was on June 1st 1968, after the violent anti-Springer demonstrations and the occupation of the University of Frankfurt. A year earlier, at the beginning of the massive wave of student struggles in connection with the anti-Shah demonstrations in West Berlin when the police killed an on-looking student, Habermas had warned of the dangers of a 'left fascism'! He has also been careful to distance himself from the views of Marcuse; see his introduction to *Antworten auf Herbert Marcuse*, op. cit.



tion. But where for Marx this contradiction was to be overcome by a class struggle which transforms capitalist productive forces and relations of production into socialism by means of a revolutionary seizure of State power, Habermas's reduction of Marxism to the mere critique of ideology leads directly to the suggestion that it will be harmoniously settled through criticism of the structures of public opinion by the enlightened efforts of critical students and scholars.<sup>32</sup>

Hence Habermas's popularity among young Anglo-Saxon reformist academics. He combines an apparently left-wing pedigree, conventional humanism and a notion that the basic political problems are problems of communication. The vulgarity of this bland syrup of ideas is evident. Since, however, it is a law of ideological gravitation that eclecticism attracts empiricism, British and Scandinavian sociology incipiently feels strongly drawn towards him. A vogue for Habermas is a predictable product of its own horizons.

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<sup>32</sup> Habermas is now generally regarded as a conventional revisionist on the German left. Cf. the critiques of the 'Habermas School' in the West Berlin journal *Sozialistische Politik* No. 4, December 1969. These are a far cry from the confusion in several of the contributions to the volume defending the student movement against Habermas's attack of June 1968. The editor of this volume, the young Frankfurt philosopher Oskar Negt, even reproached Habermas with having Leninist views! *Die Linke autorisiert Jürgen Habermas*, op. cit., p. 31.

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# Russian Police Trade Unionism

**Experiment or Provocation?**

DIMITRY POSPIELOVSKY

**Foreword by Professor Leonard Shapiro**

*This book is the first to deal at length with a fascinating episode in Russian history: the attempt, between 1898 and 1903, to set up independent trade unions divorced from revolutionary groups and with the aim of leading Russia along the path of gradual reform within the tsarist system*

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## The Internationalization of Capital and the Nation State

Liberal models of the international economy, as of international relations in general, still spring predominantly from an early utilitarianism. The nation state is treated as the basic category in the world: the atom of the system. States are assumed to be rational, self-conscious, self-determining units, analogies of economic man. International relations, whether political or economic, are above all relations between these independent states whose conduct is assumed to be based on the principle of maximizing their own net benefit subject to internal and external constraints. Developments in the structure of economic organisations since 1945, especially the rapid growth of international firms, have brought into question the solitary concern of international relations with international state relations. International institutions have grown up, like the IMF, the World Bank or the largest of the international corporations themselves, which have a greater significance than many national states, developed or underdeveloped. Raymond Vernon, the head of the Harvard Business School Research Programme on the international firm, puts the point in this way:

'the advanced world, carried ebulliently on the crest of a technological revolution in transportation and communication, has absentmindedly set up a virile system of international institutions and relationships that sit alongside the system of nation-states.'<sup>1</sup> Moreover, together with the appearance of these international institutions comes a weakening of the nation states themselves: Kindleberger for example argues that 'the nation state is just about through as an economic unit.'<sup>2</sup>

### The Problem of Territorial Non-Coincidence

The rapid post-war expansion of international firms has therefore brought into question the analytical primacy of the basic elements of the liberal model of the international system, and in doing so, has raised to the forefront the question of the relationship between political and economic organization. For it now appears that, for certain countries at least, there is no longer a one-to-one correspondence between the two. An editorial in *Fortune* summed up this view: 'the real point is that business everywhere is outgrowing national boundaries and, in so doing, is creating new tensions between the way the world is organized politically and the way in which it will be increasingly organized economically'.<sup>3</sup> Now while this territorial non-coincidence is a common observation, there is little developed analysis by, let alone agreement between, liberal writers on the subject as to the consequences of such non-coincidence on political organization. In this they are reflecting a more general lack of attention in Anglo-Saxon economic theory to the structural relationship between private capital and public power.

In contrast to the atomistic liberal model, Marxist writers have tended to see the international economy not as an aggregation of national economies, but as a total system in which nations are subordinate structures. Trotsky for example writes that the world economy should be seen 'not as the simple addition of its national units, but as a powerful independent reality created by the international division of labour and by the world market which dominates all the national markets'.<sup>4</sup> Marx himself emphasized that capitalist production was indissolubly linked with foreign trade<sup>5</sup> and that the capitalist division of labour was an international one. 'Thanks to the machine, the spinner can live in England while the weaver resides in the East Indies.'<sup>6</sup> The international division of labour represents an advanced stage of the socialization of production.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Vernon, 'Economic Sovereignty At Bay', *Foreign Affairs*, October 1968, pp. 119-120.

<sup>2</sup> C. P. Kindleberger, *American Business Abroad*. Yale 1969, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> *Fortune*, August 15th, 1969, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> L. Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*. French ed, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> This point is well made by Tom Kemp in his chapter on Marx in *Theories of Imperialism*, London, 1967. It is interesting that in Vol. 1 of *Capital* Marx purposely assumes away the international aspect of capitalist systems: 'In order to examine the object of our investigation in its integrity, free from all disturbing subsidiary circumstances, we must treat the whole world as one nation, and assume that capitalist production is everywhere established and has possessed itself of every branch of industry.' Moscow ed. Vol. 1, p. 581. n.l.

<sup>6</sup> K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 139. see also p. 144.

Within the world economy some national capitals are more powerful than others. Their territorial expansion is the subject matter of the Marxist theories of imperialism, yet it is an expansion into fundamentally pre-capitalist areas. The political organizations of the imperialist powers are in this case expanded alongside the territorial expansion of their economic organizations: the one-to-one relationship is preserved at the expense of the pre-capitalist public structures of the imperialized regions.

The post-Second World War developments of colonial liberation and the interpenetration of the advanced capitalist states themselves has now raised the question of what we called 'territorial non-coincidence'<sup>7</sup> which liberal writers have registered but not answered. The issue is whether, with an increasingly interdependent international economic system, national capitalist states will continue to be the primary structures within the international economic system, or whether the expanded territorial range of capitalist production will require the parallel expansion of co-ordinated state functions, either through the *de facto* annexation of weaker nations by the stronger, or through some form of supranational state.

This does of course regenerate the Kautsky/Lenin controversy on ultra-imperialism. Kautsky suggested the possibility of 'a new ultra-imperialist policy, which will introduce the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital in place of the mutual rivalries of national finance capital.'<sup>8</sup> In his reply Lenin argued that the international alliances which Kautsky observed were no more than truces between wars: for these alliances were based upon the economic, financial and military strength of the parties at the time of the formation of the alliance, and since these strengths develop unequally between nations the alliances would inevitably become anachronistic. The necessary rivalry between capitalist states would remain.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, while Lenin regards as indubitable the 'growing international interweaving between the cliques of finance capital' which Kautsky saw as a basis for his forecast, he cites the armament industry to support the thesis that the internationalization of capital may increase rather than reduce national rivalry. 'Interlinked on a world-wide scale, capital is thriving on armaments and wars.'<sup>9</sup>

While we may agree with Lenin's castigation of Kautsky's position as 'lifeless abstractions' which mystify rather than reveal international antagonisms as they then existed, we should also note that Lenin does not discuss the consequences for the power and independence of nation states resulting from the interpenetration of national capitals. Certainly there is a tendency in 20th-century Marxist writing on the world economy to infuse the nation state with an independence set apart from the range and power of its own national capital. Nation

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<sup>7</sup> K. Kautsky, *Die Neue Zeit* No 5, April, 30th, 1915, p. 144, quoted in V. I. Lenin, *The Collapse of the Second International*, Moscow, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow, pp. 110-111.

<sup>9</sup> V. I. Lenin, *The Collapse of the Second International*, p. 22.

states become an entity without substance.<sup>10</sup>

This, in part at least, reflects the predominantly political treatment which the state has received in Marxist literature. Until recently it was primarily the repressive role of the state in capitalism which has been emphasized: a recent work, by Milliband, has brought out its ideological function.<sup>11</sup> What is remarkable is how little attention has been given to the economic role of the state in capitalism, and it is this which seems to me to be central to any discussion on the robustness of the nation state in an era of interpenetration of national capitals, the subject raised without a satisfactory answer in the Lenin/Kautsky debate.

Thus I would argue that in spite of its underlining of the trends of accumulation and centralization of capital, and in spite of its discussion of the political role of the state, Marxist theory has not brought these two aspects of analysis together to clarify the problem of the substance and the adequacy of nation states at a time of international centralization and concentration. There is as yet no adequate approach to the issue we first raised, that of territorial non-coincidence. As a result recent Marxist forecasts of the political implications of the internationalization of capital have been as uncertain, unsubstantiated, and in some cases as 'lifelessly abstract' as those made by liberal writers.

In what follows, I have tried to sketch out the factors which seem to me important in developing a more adequate approach. There are three main sections: (i) discusses the structural role of the state in capitalism; (ii) covers the relationship between state and capital at a time of capitalist territorial expansion; (iii) deals with this relationship as it pertains to the contemporary world economy.

## 1. The Structural Role of the State as an Economic Instrument of Capitalism.

I want to suggest in this section that the state is an objective structure in any capitalist system, that, contrary to liberal models, capitalism cannot be analysed as a system without taking account of the role of the state, and that, more particularly, in the process of capitalist production and reproduction the state has certain economic functions which it will always perform, though in different forms and to different extents. It is these economic functions with which we will be concerned, for, in tracing the territorial expansion of individual capitals, one of the central points at issue will be what bodies perform these structural economic functions for the expanded capitals. If the performance of certain economic functions by a state body is a *sine qua non* of any capitalist system, the territorial expansion of that system will imply the need for the performance of state economic functions in the expanded territory.

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<sup>10</sup> A notable exception to this point is Ernest Mandel, particularly in his more recent writings.

<sup>11</sup> R. Milliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, London 1969. See also, the review by N. Poulantzas of Milliband's book in *New Left Review* 58.

Two points should be made immediately clear. First, state economic functions for any given capital or coherent body of capitals need not be exercised by a single authority, though commonly there will be a dominant authority. Second, the body or bodies which perform these functions are not necessarily the governing authorities of nation states. For when we talk of 'state' economic functions we refer to what may most aptly be called 'economic *res publica*', those economic matters which are public, external to individual private capitals. These public economic matters may be dealt with by a grouping of private capitals, by national governments, or by international public bodies. For the moment we are more concerned with the character of these public matters than with the bodies that deal with them.

I will distinguish six economic '*res publica*', or state functions<sup>12</sup>:

1. *Guaranteeing of property rights.* For Engels this was the primary function of the state. This guarantee is backed by forces of law: the police and armed forces. In modern capitalist states, one interesting area of its active application is in the protection of the integrity of self-declared fishery limits. Or, to take another example, in Britain there is a demand by the private sector for the extension of the guarantee to the 'sanctity' of private information in the form of heavier sanctions against industrial spying.

2. *Economic Liberalization.* This involves the establishment of the conditions for free, competitive exchange: the *abolition* of restrictions on the movement of goods, money or people within the territorial area and the *standardization* of currency, economic law, weights and measures and so on. The process characterizes the early stages in the establishment of an expanded territorially distinct system and is the substance of the neo-classical formulation of economic integration as the absence or progressive elimination of discriminations (see for example Bela Balassa, *Theory of Economic Integration* 1962). Indeed, one of the clearest current examples of such liberalization is the European Common Market. The double process of the abolition of restrictions and standardization is the principle characteristic of the decade which has followed the coming into force of the Treaty of Rome: though it is a process nowhere near complete. Within advanced capitalist countries economic liberalization is primarily 'regressive' in character and takes the form of anti-monopoly legislation, action against restrictive practises, including resale price maintenance, and restrictions on trade unions and the use of labour's power.

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<sup>12</sup> I do not want to go into here the question of the 'overdetermination' of the economic functions by the political functions, a point which is emphasised by Poulantzas in his *Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales*, Paris 1968. Poulantzas sees the state as 'the factor of cohesion of a social formation and the factor of reproduction of the conditions of production of a system', with the state in its economic role being the factor of cohesion in this particular level of the social formation. The economic functions of the state are simultaneously political functions, corresponding to the political interests of the dominant class. See *Pouvoir Politique*, especially pp. 53-54. It seems to me that we can usefully examine the economic functions of the state in this paper as a preliminary step to understanding more fully its overall political significance.

3. *Economic Orchestration*: a matter which includes the regulation of business cycles, and economic planning. The forthcoming role of public bodies in this case contrasts with their retiring role in the case of economic liberalization, and it is this more active form of intervention which distinguishes the social democratic view of economic integration from the neo-classical one. The former sees economic integration as not simply the removal of discriminations but the pursuit of an economic policy aimed at productive harmony: 'to integrate is to increase for a given space the compatibility of the plans of a group of decision centres which together form a single economic system' (Maurice Byé in *Revue Economique* 1958).<sup>13</sup> The state is in this case most clearly the factor of cohesion of an economic formation, playing an increasingly strong ideological role *vis à vis* the productive system (see the British National Plan of 1965 where the propaganda function of the Plan is stated to be among the most important).

4. *Input Provision*. Public bodies have been required to secure the availability of key inputs at low cost:

a) Labour. States have acted to ensure (i) the existence of a proletariat, either directly or indirectly; see for example the statutory extension of the working day in England, the Stein-Herdenberg reforms of agrarian relations in early 19th-century Prussia, or the results of the French credit policy in Indo-China in the colonial period; (ii) the training of proletariat, visible both in public education systems or current industrial training schemes; (iii) the control of wages of a proletariat, for examples of which we need go no further than the contemporary incomes policies of advanced capitalist countries. It is particularly interesting in respect to the question of labour provision that Swedish social democratic governments have put the main emphasis of their post-war economic policy not on nationalization (of which there is probably less than in other advanced Western European countries) but on the control of the labour force—its size, its quality, and its redeployment.<sup>14</sup>

b) Land. A market for land has been required not only for the development of commodity agriculture (see the state's role in the English enclosure movement) but also for the siting of public utilities, notably transport and housing (see the right of 'eminent domain' given to private corporations in the United States in the 19th century which enabled those developing public utilities to compulsorily acquire any land needed for their operations).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> A useful survey of concepts of economic integration can be found in R. Erbes, *L'Integration Economique Internationale*, Paris 1966.

<sup>14</sup> See A. Shonfield, *Modern Capitalism*, Oxford 1965, pp. 200-201. In relation to labour provision Dobb suggests in his *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, London, Revised edition 1963, that 'there seems to be at least *prima facie* evidence for connecting periods when the policy of the state in a class society moves in the direction of economic regulation with periods of actual or apprehended labour-scarcity, and periods when State policy is inspired by a spirit of economic liberalism with an opposite situation.' He is speaking of regulations and controls by the state governing price or output or entry to a trade or change of employment, during peace-time. see pp. 23-24.

<sup>15</sup> Shonfield, *op. cit.* p. 306.

c) Capital. Governments have acted to ensure the supply of finance to its industry through (i) the establishment and backing of a national banking system and private money market, as exemplified in the post-war history of certain countries in the British Commonwealth as well as in the history of French banking; (ii) the establishment of Funds for particular industrial projects; (iii) the granting of credits, and subsidies in other ways, including tax allowances, investment grants, special interest rates and so on: in France for example in the early 1960's it was estimated that 80 per cent of business borrowers were servicing their loans at rates of interest below the market rate,<sup>16</sup> and one calculation for Britain suggests that about half of all private fixed capital formation in the country is effectively financed by the government.

d) Technology. The role of advanced capitalist states in the development of technology is well documented: the Department of Defence is estimated to finance over half of all R & D done in the US, with figures up to 90 per cent for the aviation and spacecraft industries, and 85 per cent for electronics, for all government R & D financing. Governments have also been active importers of foreign technology: the French government introduced new industrial processes from abroad by the import of machines and skilled labour in the 17th century, as did the Japanese in the early period of their industrial revolution. The state's pronounced role in the development of new technology rests on four factors: (i) technological research and development involves high risk; (ii) it is subject to economies of scale; (iii) it is by its nature closely connected to academic institutions, which have been public and financed by the state; (iv) technology has always been closely bound to the military which in turn is almost always controlled and financed by the state; indeed it would be strange to find new military technology whose development was not considerably funded by a state.<sup>17</sup>

e) Economic infrastructure, particularly energy and communications. These sectors are distinguished not only by their being 'natural monopolies' but by being inputs common to almost all productive activity: there is accordingly a particularly clear interest in the presence of cheap, secure supplies of these services. In Risorgimento Italy, the first years of the new state were characterized by a frantic burst of railway building by the government, and although the new system was sold to private capital in 1865 the financial vicissitudes of the latter caused the government to return and by 1905 control the bulk of the system. In Germany, too, the railways were increasingly a state system after 1871, with notably low rates, while in Japan in the decade after 1868 it was the state which built and operated railways and telegraph systems, opened coal mines and established agricultural experimental stations. The public control of these utilities in contemporary Western Europe, and the system of regulation in the United States is well known: what should be emphasized of course is their controlled rates to industry—controls which are in the process of being given their

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> The relationship of the state to the development of technology in modern capitalism is extensively discussed in a forthcoming work by Sergio Barro and John Rickliff.



ideological rationale in the form of the theory of marginal cost pricing.<sup>18</sup>

f) General manufactured inputs. These comprise those manufactured products with the strongest forward linkages for the economy in general, or for a key sector in the economy. They tend to be less general than the utilities discussed above, and are less directly controlled by the state though often regulated. Steel is a prime example, publicly owned in Britain, Austria, and to a lesser extent in Italy. Austria has nationalised a variety of electrical and engineering firms. In Italy IRI plays an important, though minority role in the cement industry. The Japanese government in the same period as it set up public utilities, also established iron foundries, shipyards, machine shops and model factories to manufacture cement, paper and glass.

5. *Intervention for social consensus.* Here the public function is concerned to mollify the most manifest disruptive effects on and exploitation of non-capitalist classes. It covers:

a) Prevention of public external diseconomies such as pollution, the degradation of land- and townscape, or wide regional disparities.

b) Regulation of conditions of work, including the enforcement of industrial safety, the limitation of working hours, and some wage-setting such as minimum wages or equal pay for women.

c) Regulation of conditions of sale, as in the Swedish state consumer protection system, trade description laws, or the nationalization of pubs in Carlisle by Lloyd George to control drinking by munitions workers at Gretna.

d) Certain aspects of social security, notably unemployment provisions.

e) ideological functions *vis à vis* the productive system, carried out not only by the more general cultural institutions such as the education system, and the communications media, but by specific institutions like the Prices and Incomes Board.

6. *Management of the external relations of a capitalist system.* No capitalist system is closed. The organization of the relations of this system with foreign systems, both within and outside the domestic territory of the system has been a prime function of states at all stages of capitalist development. One part of this function is aggressive: the support of the state's own capitalists in their expansion into foreign economic and territorial space. It involves the attack on monopolistic walls which discriminate against domestic capitalists, such as tariff barriers, exchange controls, discriminatory taxation, unfavourable purchasing policies by foreign monopolists or states. It also involves the support of domestic capitalists in competitive foreign markets, and the

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<sup>18</sup> A brief discussion of the Italian and German experiences is contained in Tom Kemp, *Industrialization in Nineteenth Century Europe*, London 1969. For the use of IRI to hold down prices in Italy, see Shonfield, *op. cit.* p. 186.

attempt not merely to reduce foreign discrimination but build up monopolistic positions for domestic capitalists abroad.

A second part of the function is defensive, and consists in defending quasi-monopolistic positions established by domestic capitalists relative to foreign capital. It involves the maintenance of discriminations against foreign capital, tariffs, exchange control, purchasing tied to domestic capital: the maintenance of preferential trading areas and monetary zones favourable to the domestic capital: the restriction of the carriage of goods abroad to national ships or airlines: and the maintenance of the property rights of nationals overseas.

The instruments used in the performance of these functions are:

i) Military power, whether defensively against a foreign force, or aggressively in terms of punitive expeditions or of more permanent annexations. The defensive use of force has usually been over the challenge to property rights, not only in domestic territory but the nationalization of property overseas: we have already mentioned fishing as a less publicized area where military power is common, and it is interesting to note that over and above the defence of fishery limits, the British government sent a gunboat to support British trawlers during the Icelandic fishing dispute from 1958-61, asserting in this case a right to what it as a state regarded as common property.

ii) Aid, or foreign public assistance, which is used in two forms. First it lends support to national firms engaged in foreign competition through lowering costs (either by direct subsidization as in the case of French fine linen exports in the 18th century, or through export credit and foreign investment guarantee programmes such as those provided by the FCIA, the Export-Import Bank and AID in the United States) and/or by tying markets (AID financing tied to us exports now accounts for 85-90 per cent of total AID financing, while a total of 4 per cent of all us exports are now financed by direct loans to the purchaser from the us government). Second the threat of withdrawing an established aid flow or withholding a new aid flow acts as a protection to the property rights of domestic firms in the foreign country, as well as an inducement to the receiving country to lower discriminations against the donor's capital: the effect of the Hickenlooper amendment on recipients of us aid lies as much in the threat as in the execution.<sup>19</sup>

iii) Commercial sanctions, in the form of trade boycotts (South Africa, Rhodesia, newly independent Guinea, the Middle East, Cuba, North Vietnam, China) quotas, or tariff changes.

iv) Financial sanctions in terms of the blocking of funds (the post-war history of the us film industry in Britain presents an interesting example where following the imposition of a 75 per cent customs duty by the UK and a subsequent 8 month boycott of Britain by the us cinema industry, an agreement was reached that no more than \$17 million of

<sup>19</sup> I have discussed the subject of aid as an overseas extension of state functions *vis à vis* its private capital in: 'Aid and the International Firm', *May Day Manifesto Bulletin*, No. 16/17, November 1969.

us film earnings in the UK would be allowed to be repatriated: these controls lasted until 1961), or the establishment of exchange premiums.

v) Government controls within domestic territory, such as the reserving of certain sectors for domestic industry, the prevention of particular takeovers, discriminatory buying policies and so on.<sup>20</sup>

Over and above the function of partiality to domestic capital *vis à vis* foreign competitors, whether this partiality is offensive or defensive, the state has the second function of co-ordinating or orchestrating domestic/foreign economic relations in the form of supervising the Balance of Payments. We will have cause to discuss the contradictions that exist between these two functions in dominated states in the third part of the paper.

These six functions seem to me the primary functions of a capitalist state: the guaranteeing of property rights; economic liberalization; economic orchestration; input provision; intervention for social consensus; and the management of the external relations of a capitalist system. Five further functions suggest themselves.

i) The role of the state in securing demand in the form of mass purchases from the private sector on long-term contract: private capital is here acting as quasi-agent for the state, and this character is made explicit in the management contracts concluded by firms like Booker Brothers and RNI with the governments of underdeveloped countries:

ii) The state as a taxation authority, a function whose importance is particularly evident in the development of capitalist economies;

iii) The state as the enforcer and protector of particular monopolies *within* a capitalist system;


iv) The state as a provider of first aid to ailing sectors and firms: we have mentioned above the relationship of the Italian state to its railways in the 19th century: the salvaging of four major banks by the Weimar Republic in 1931 and their return to private owners in 1937 when they were assured of good profits is a further instance;

v) The state as an absorber of surplus: a point emphasized by Baran and Sweezy in their *Monopoly Capital*.

I have not included these among the primary functions since they all follow from those we have included. Thus to take the question of 'first aid', it is notable that such action has been principally directed either towards those sectors producing general inputs or to those sectors which are important in foreign relations, whether in the field of exports, invisible earnings or military power. If we look at those industries which have been nationalized in the advanced capitalist countries—a solution almost always accompanied by the ultimate in

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<sup>20</sup> The mechanics of neo-colonialism are more fully discussed in a number of places: see, for example, *May Day Manifesto*, London 1968.



first aid, namely handsome compensation, these are most commonly in the sectors providing basic inputs; there are a few in the export sector (Ireland has a number of public manufacturing concerns in this category); and almost none in the sector producing manufactured goods for final consumption (the public interest in Renault and Volkswagen were an exception, born from particular circumstances). First aid, in the form of subsidies, restructuring, and credits to particular firms, follows this pattern. I have therefore treated it as a secondary function deriving from the provision of basic inputs and the management of external relations. I would argue that the other functions are secondary in a similar manner.

### Determinants of Variation

The point about the primary functions is that they are found in some form at all stages of capitalist development: though the degree to which they are carried out by public bodies as well as the type of public bodies which carry them out will vary. Among the factors causing such variation we may distinguish five:

i) The degree of international competition or to put it more strongly, critical rivalry. This is perhaps strongest in wartime and the penumbra of preparation and recovery that surrounds war: such periods feature heavily in public activity in all of the functions. But similarly the developing industries in early periods of industrialization tend to face critical external competition, as List emphasized: Japan, Germany and Italy all exemplified the principle of strong government direction of the early days of their national systems of political economy. Currently it is notable how sharp an increase in public activity followed the return to convertibility of Western economies in 1958<sup>21</sup>.

ii) The stage of capitalist development, for the increase in the division of labour within a system, the increase in mutual interdependence, heightens the vulnerability of the system to the failure of particular parts of the system.

iii) The strength of the labour movement, since a strong movement will win concessions in the form of greater public activity in the field of measures aimed at social consensus: further, by raising the cost of labour, a strong labour movement may (a) weaken the capital's competitive position *vis à vis* foreign capital; (b) lower the rate of profit to critical levels in sectors producing general inputs.

iv) The traditional ideology with respect to the role to be played by government.

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<sup>21</sup> This last point is emphasised in M. Kidron, *Western Capitalism Since the War*, London 1968. On the more general issue, List argued in the 1840's that Britain's argument for *laissez faire* and the relegation of the economic role of the state was itself merely the use of the state to support the already well-established British private interests. Joan Robinson makes the point succinctly in her inaugural lecture when she says that 'It seems after all that the free-trade doctrine is just a more subtle form of mercantilism. It is believed in only by those who will gain an advantage from it.' *The New Mercantilism*, Cambridge 1966.

v) The degree of centralization of capital within the economy.

This last point is important, for it should be re-emphasized that the functions we have called public are not universally exercised by government or public bodies. They may be performed by the private firms themselves. For these functions arise from what can be described as external economies: whether they be Marshallian as in the case of fish conservation or specialized labour provision, i.e. where they are external to the firm but internal to the industry; or economies which are external to the firm and industry but internal to the productive system, such as the provision of basic inputs and the establishment of the necessary conditions for free exchange; or, finally, where they are external to the firm, the industry and the productive system, but internal to the society.

The fact that such external economies exist does not mean that single firms will not themselves undertake the function. Many firms have their own police force: the East India company had its own army; us corporations are currently engaged in cutting down their own pollution of the atmosphere because of their fear that such external diseconomies will harm their company image. Firms build their own roads, railways, generating plants: they run their own training schemes, and welfare systems. The point is rather that these are all activities which it may be relatively costly for the firm itself to undertake. Where there are indivisibilities, as in the basic utilities, it will clearly cost less to spread fixed costs over many firms. Where it is difficult for a firm to privatize the output from its investment, as in the case of labour training and some kinds of research, the firm will clearly prefer the investment to be shared by those who benefit. Where there is high risk, a firm will clearly prefer a large body which is more indifferent to risk to finance the project. Private capital is also invariably reluctant to be seen to be the organizers of armed forces and police.

In underdeveloped countries, where a firm or small group of firms, ~~are~~ the economy, these functions often are performed by the firms themselves: though they will always attempt to obtain contributions from others who benefit from their investment. But within the developed economies themselves the size of the major firms means that some of the external economies are becoming internal, and that, in the field of communications in particular, firms are providing some of their own services. The British Steel Corporation owns the largest private air fleet in Britain. Fords Europe have the largest internal telephone system in Europe. AT & T have an internal communications system which gives them decisive competitive advantages.

Thus though the public functions we have discussed are latently public by their nature, the degree to which they are exercised by public authorities will not be constant.

This section has been concerned with the role of the state in capitalism treated as an economic space. The next section will treat of the relationship of state and capital in territorial space.

## 2. State and Capital in Territorial Space

The socialization of production under capitalism, the widening division of labour and interdependence between capitals, have a territorial as well as an economic dimension. As Mandel puts it: 'in place of the fragmentation of patriarchal, slave-owning or feudal society into thousands of tiny cells, each one independent of every other, with only rudimentary links (particularly exchange links) between them, there has come the world-wide relationship between men.'<sup>22</sup> Capitalist systems developed in territorially identifiable areas, often in areas which had already been made identifiable by pre-capitalist states. During the national period of capitalism, the roots of both private capitals and the states which performed the public functions we have described above, were territorially coincident and predominantly exclusive. Both capitals and states extended beyond their own boundaries: we have already noted that from the first, capitalist systems have an international dimension. But the bulk of their activities covered the same geographical space.

When any capital extends beyond its national boundaries, the historical link that binds it to its particular domestic state no longer necessarily holds. A capital which has extended itself in this way will require the performance of the primary public functions for its extended operations. But the body which performs them need not be the same as the body that performs them within the area of the capital's early development. The domestic state may perform the public functions abroad for its own national capital. A national state body is not territorially limited in its range of activity, even though it may be territorially identified over an exclusive area. But the geographic coincidence of the economic ranges of an extended capital with its domestic state must be empirically established and cannot be assumed.

We can identify five possible executors of the state functions for the overseas operations of an extended capital:

i) As we have already mentioned, the domestic state may perform these functions directly, which for the majority of the functions will involve the extension of the state's own boundaries through annexation. Since this involves an extension of the national defendenda, a considerable cost, and usually a problem, to say the least, in the performance of the function of ensuring social consensus in the foreign territory, the geographic expansion of the domestic state is a method less preferred from a capitalist point of view for fulfilling the state functions overseas. It will be supported when alternative systems are economically or politically impossible.

ii) The arrangement that foreign state structures should perform them. Such an arrangement may be made by the capital itself or its domestic state, either through persuasion, pressure or intrigue. The foreign state becomes in effect a macro-political agent. It is an arrangement which forms the basis for any conception of economic neo-

<sup>22</sup> E. Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory*. Vol. 1, p. 170.

colonialism: though the existence and degree of neo-colonialism will depend on the extent of the concessions to the foreign state to induce it to perform the functions in question.

The guaranteeing of the property rights of the extended firm, and the prevention of major discriminations by the foreign state against it are backed by the type of negative sanctions outlined above in the section on the management of external relations (pp 9-10). The provision of basic inputs, as well as the establishment of organizational structures to carry out the normal business of a capitalist state (police forces, mass media, tax authorities, economic 'orchestrators') are on the other hand often directly funded. In underdeveloped countries economic services for a particular area may be financed, planned and technically supervised by the public authorities and private contractors of the domestic state *after* an exploitable resource has been discovered by one of its capitalists abroad. If one looks at foreign extractive firms operating in Africa, for example, they have almost without exception got finance for necessary infrastructure from their domestic governments or international agencies—though this finance is channelled through the host government.<sup>23</sup> The establishment of organizational structures may again involve seconded nationals from the home country directly fulfilling the function or the training of host nationals in domestic or host country institutions. One of the early actions of the Americans in Vietnam after 1954 was the dispatch of a Michigan State University Group to advise President Diem's brother Nhu on police organization. By 1956 600 policemen had been trained, 12,000 civil guard or militia, and a scheme instituted to fingerprint the whole South Vietnamese population. This, like the financing of other organizational structures, would come under the heading of technical aid—though technical aid of course covers a wider field.

The performance of public functions by foreign agent states is accomplished therefore by a mixture of positive supplies channelled through the agent states, and negative threats and sanctions. It is not limited to underdeveloped countries: Marshall aid is in many ways parallel as far as Europe is concerned. What I would argue, and this relates to the point I made at the end of the sub-section on geographical expansion is that neo-colonialism in its various degrees is the more normal way for a home state to ensure the fulfillment of state functions for its capital in weaker areas abroad and that direct annexation is a departure from this norm. Annexation may result from a foreign state refusing to act as agent, from the absence of a foreign state capable of carrying out the functions, or from the lack of concern by the expanding capital for a consensus in the area in which it is operating. The relationship of colonialism to neo-colonialism has many other facets, but in one sense we could see the colonial period as a necessary stage for the establishment of neo-colonialism in those regions.

lii) The extended capital may itself perform the functions, either singly or in conjunction with other capitals. We noted above examples of this

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<sup>23</sup> See note 19 above.

in the field of policing and input provisions.<sup>24</sup> It also extends to the threat of negative sanctions on foreign states discriminating or nationalizing the firms in questions: the international oil majors have exercised oligopolistic solidarity against national governments on a number of occasions—notably against Iran after the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian.<sup>25</sup> Non-ferrous metal corporations have exercised similar threats in the form of withdrawing key inputs or closing international markets.

iv) Foreign states may already be performing or be willing to perform the functions of their own accord. Most advanced capitalist countries would extend protection of property rights, freedom of exchange, input provision, macro-orchestration and consensual intervention to foreign investors in their country. The major function which they may be reluctant to perform is that of partiality *vis à vis* other foreign interests, and impartiality in terms of their own domestic capital. Of course, many of the instruments used by a state to favour its own national capital, will also apply to foreign capitals who have invested within the national boundaries. This is true of tariff and monetary agreements, export credits, services of commercial branches of the country's embassies abroad and so on. Indeed it is often this ability to enjoy the monopolistic discriminations of foreign countries that induces a firm to invest abroad: us firms invest in Britain to more cheaply service their export markets in the Sterling Area or EFTA. There are instances, too, as with ICI in Argentina, where a firm negotiates a favourable discrimination from a foreign government as a condition for investing in the country. Smaller countries, such as Ireland, go even further than this by making general offers of monopolistic advantages to foreign investors which exceed those offered to their national capital. The one notable exception to this picture of discriminations operating in favour of foreign investors comes in the field of government purchasing: the reason is clear in the case of military contracts, but the UK government for example operates the principle more generally. It openly favoured British firms in the allocation of North Sea drilling blocks, while in the computer field IBM claim that they supply only 2 out of the 72 computers used by the government.<sup>26</sup> Yet even this unfavourable discrimination is *a priori* limited to countries which have national producers of the contracted products, which in the field of advanced technology tends to be few. The overall picture therefore, is one of remarkably little discrimination against foreign capital which invest in a host country: extended capital has been able to rely on host governments to fulfill the public functions certainly as far as the advanced capitalist countries in Europe are concerned.

v) The final group of executors of state functions are existing state

<sup>24</sup> An interesting example of private policing on an international level is provided by the companies who own submarine cables. They have their own patrol vessels operating particularly in fishing areas with a view to enforcing what would be an otherwise virtually unenforceable international public agreement regarding the damage of cables.

<sup>25</sup> For a useful discussion on operations of international oil companies, see M. Towner, *The Political Economy of International Oil and the Underdeveloped Countries*, London 1970.

<sup>26</sup> L. Turner, *Politics and the Multinational Company*, Fabian Society, 1969, p. 29.



bodies in co-operation with each other. Instances of such co-operation can be found in the following fields:

- a) property protection (mutual investment guarantees, international policing, extradition treaties, military alliances).
- b) implementation of free exchange and standardization between countries. (Free trade areas, customs unions, common markets—which attach greater importance to standardization, monetary unions.)
- c) mutual orchestration—a function performed to some extent in the IMF, the OECD, and in the BIS by central bankers.
- d) provision of inputs; the co-operation arising for reasons of scale as in technological co-operation, or in the provision of power supplies, or because the service is trans-national such as the Tan Zam railway.
- e) the exploitation of international resources, as is the case in river development schemes, or the numerous international fish conservation agreements.
- f) supervision of mutual economic interests *vis à vis* other economic powers: OPEC and the meetings of the four major copper producing countries in the underdeveloped world are examples of this form of co-operation; multilateral aid agencies could also be seen in this light.

In contrast to the intranational public functions which we noted were fulfilled by foreign states, these co-operative agreements are aimed at trans-national functions. But many of them have been far from successful in fulfilling their aim: this is notably so in the field of inter-governmental technological co-operation, and in fishery regulation. Even where the co-operation has been more successful, the success is in most cases temporary: those involving international external economies (economies which are external to the nation but international to the capitalist world economy) particularly in the fields of free exchange and mutual orchestration, may be thought unlikely to survive a major international depression. The conditions for the establishment of a more permanent form of integrated co-operation, a *de facto* international state body, we will discuss in a moment.

### Forms of Extending Capital

The line of argument up to this point has been that a national capital extending abroad will require the primary public functions we outlined in part 1 to be performed: but that the performance need not be undertaken by the capital's home government. There is no necessary link between the extended capital and its home government in the extended area. The body or bodies which do perform the functions may differ according to whether the functions are to be undertaken *within* areas with already constituted capitalist states, *between* areas with already constituted capitalist states, or *within* areas without already constituted capitalist states. In each case the home government could perform the functions: but in each case there are alternatives; and there is also the possibility—a very real one which we have underplayed until now—that the contradictions of the international system will be such as to prevent the fulfilment of the functions at all. The outcome for any one

extending capital will depend on the power of its domestic government, both economic and political, to 'follow' its own capital, on the territory of extension, and on the particular form taken by the extension. It is this last point about the form of extension which I now want to take up.

Extending capital is not homogeneous, even though many discussions of overseas investment and its implications treat it as such. More particularly the interest of the capital in the types of public function to be performed, and the bodies to perform them will differ according to the following factors:

i) The degree of *productive centralization*, that is to say the degree to which foreign markets are served by output whose production and inputs supplies are concentrated in one country. Those companies with a high export: foreign sales ratio stand at one pole: those serving foreign markets from production and input provision in the market concerned stand at the other. Steel and parts of the electrical industry would stand nearer the first pole: service industries nearer the second. Clearly those with centralized production, with a high proportion of trade to decentralized production, will be most concerned with the establishment and maintenance of conditions of free international exchange. Productive centralization with high trade: foreign sales ratios is a characteristic of the early period of capitalist international expansion, and is reflected in the frequent international disputes over tariffs that occurred prior to this century.

The conflicting pressures relating to the international centralization of production—economies of scale tending towards centralization on the one hand, transport costs, tariff barriers, spare part and market servicing requirements tending towards decentralization on the other—leads commonly to *regional centralization of production*. This is true of consumer durables in particular, as well as other branded goods (Colgate-Palmolive or Mars products for example). South-East Asia may be served from Australia or Malaysia, Central America from Mexico, EFTA from Britain, and the EEC from Holland. Such companies will again have a primary interest in regional free trade.

ii) *Stage of overseas company development*. Many companies have expanded abroad by what might be called an ink-blot strategy. They expand outwards from existing operations both territorially, and structurally. In consumer durables for instance one notes an expansion path which involves exporting through overseas agents, exporting through company marketing organizations, local assembly, local full production, then regional centralization of production or regional division of labour in production, and in some cases the development of an international division of labour in production.<sup>27</sup> Such expansion paths have been followed by some US companies in Europe in the post-war period, with a number now reaching the stage of productive centralization or regional division of labour within the EEC. It is instructive that by the end of 1968

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the ink-blot form of foreign expansion, see Y. Aharoni, *The Foreign Investment Decision Process*, 1966.

there were over 800 European headquarters groups in Brussels, though it is the productive rather than organizational division of labour with which we are primarily concerned.<sup>23</sup> Thus the stage of company development will be one of the factors determining the degree of productive centralization or, an equally important point, the degree of *international division of labour in production*.

iii) *Forms of international flow*. Certain firms are principally concerned with the international flow of information and personnel rather than goods. Many service industries have this characteristic: with decentralized production served by a centralized information and management system. Advertising, management consultancy, data processing, film production, hotel management, and department stores all exemplify the point. They may either work on a management contract (like many of the Hilton hotels), or raise capital in the local market on the strength of their international name in order to fund local operations. The size of the overseas interests in the general field of management services, licencing, leasing, and so on can be gauged by the receipts of us companies of royalties and fees. In 1968 these totalled \$1.28b., comprising \$0.54b. in the form of royalties, licence fees and rentals, and \$0.64b. in the form of management fees and service charges. These figures compare with total earnings of us direct investment abroad in the same year of \$7.0b. The important feature of this type of international operation is that in general the movement of people and information is not subject to the same restrictions as the movement of goods: though they are subject to restrictions on the movement of capital. Be that as it may, firms such as those we have discussed, may in general be presumed to be less concerned with international exchange restrictions than firms depending on the international movement of goods.

iv) *Degree of dependence on state partiality*. Some companies by the nature of their operations depend more heavily on their domestic state for preferential aid. This is true of the contracting industry, of exporters to and investors in underdeveloped countries, and of firms whose sales may be predominantly in the home market but whose inputs they produce or buy from abroad. These firms will be concerned to see the maintenance of the strength of their domestic states in international markets.

v) *The strength of foreign competition*. Where domestic states are incapable of providing preferential protection and aid to firms highly dependent on them either in domestic or foreign markets, there will be an interest among firms in this position to either transfer to stronger state structures or to encourage its own state structure to co-operate with others. There are few examples of the former move—Mars changed nationalities principally because of the rationalizing of its international operations by its founder—but in respect to the latter, European firms have evidently favoured inter-governmental European co-operation be-

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<sup>23</sup> See Newton Parkes, 'The Failure of the European Headquarters', *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1969.

cause they regard their domestic governments as inadequate in the field of protection.

We are now in a position to make an important distinction. There are some firms whose main concern with respect to their extended capital is the *intranational* performance of public functions. The current system of nation states may be largely adequate for a system, say, of decentralized production. For some indeed the current system shows positive advantages. We have noted already how some capitals have expanded abroad precisely in order to take advantage of other nations' sets of discriminations. We may add to this the fact that companies which are financially centralized internationally may in effect play off rival states against each other, locating where incentives are greatest either for production or profit retrieval. Given that the performance of public functions has to be paid for, such firms may minimize the costs (in terms of taxation) of the services they receive. The system of tax havens has given rise to what might almost be called flagless capitals, firms registered in Curaçao, Malta or Luxembourg operating internationally under public 'umbrellas' financed by rival capitals. Thus even where there is extensive territorial non-coincidence between domestic states and their extended capitals, this does not imply that the system of atomistic nation states is outdated. The remark by the editors of *Monthly Review* that 'multinational corporations and nations are therefore fundamentally and irrevocably opposed to each other'.<sup>29</sup> is not necessarily true.

In contrast, there are other firms whose interests lie not only in their intranational performance of public functions for its extended capital, but the *inter-national* performance of them as well. We noted the following types of capital to whom this applied:

- a) those principally engaged in servicing foreign markets by trade.
- b) those with regionally centralized production.
- c) those operating with an international or regional division of labour in production.
- d) those concerned with an international exchange of goods rather than information or labour.
- e) those whose domestic government gave insufficient partial support in the face of foreign competition.

Again, the fact these interests in favour of the international performance of state functions exist does not mean that the system of nation states cannot contain them.

### The Political Framework

A dominant state may perform them. States in co-operation may perform them. Or the interests in the current national-based system, that is to say the national bourgeoisies and those international firms discussed in the previous paragraphs, may be powerful enough to cause a disintegration in the system. Finally, those firms pressing for international co-ordination for defensive reasons may sacrifice their identity by merging or being taken over by capital from the dominant country.

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<sup>29</sup> *Monthly Review*, November 1969, p. 12.

This spirit of submission is characteristic of leading firms in the countries of Southern Europe: they opt for being second in Rome rather than first in a village, when it comes to a question of their identity in the face of foreign competition. Greek capital's position on their countries proposed association with the EEC provided an interesting instance of this.

At the same time we have noted the difficulty of inter-governmental co-operation on certain central public functions, and the fragility of such co-operation in times of depression. Whether those capital interests in favour of consolidated state power for the performance of the international public functions are stronger than those defending existing state forms is a question which can be answered only by examining their relative positions at a particular historical juncture.

If the capital is dominant, its own state may be unable to impose international co-ordination either directly or indirectly. If the capital is threatened, it may nevertheless feel itself strong enough to resist within a wider co-ordinated territory. Finally, we have noted above the difficulties of achieving such co-ordination through mutual co-operation between nation states: though forms of co-operation may constitute a stage in which the forces in favour of a unified international co-ordinated power are strengthened.

If we look at the economic origins of the 2nd Reich for example, we note that the establishment of the customs union by Prussia in 1818 and its later extension as the Zollverein in 1834 appear to be the result of the need to raise revenue from customs duties plus a certain administrative convenience rather than the response to an expanding capital seeking a wider area of discriminated protection. Thus the tariff on transit goods stood much higher in 1818 than the relatively low import duty. Yet the liberalization within the area furthered industrialization, encouraged the development of a bloc system of transport (Prussian landowners who had opposed railways accepted them in the 1840's) and, in Kemp's words, 'established vested interests in the further consolidation of this preliminary unity.'<sup>30</sup> Protective tariffs were heightened particularly on British pig iron and cotton yarn, weights and measures, commercial and civil law were all standardised, and mining rights were changed to make them more accessible to capitalist exploitation. By the end of the Franco-Prussian war, again to quote Kemp, 'the business middle class did not mind so much how unification was to be achieved, or under whose auspices, as long as they could depend upon stable and orderly government at home and backing for their enterprise abroad.'<sup>31</sup> International liberalization brought about through co-operation led to an internationalization of capital which then required a unified co-ordination of state powers covering the expanded territory.

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<sup>30</sup> Kemp. *op. cit.* p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> See: Dick Parker, 'Capitalist Growth and the Formation of the German State'. Paper to the second Socialist Economists Conference, Cambridge October 1970, as well as F. Engels, *The Role of Force in History*, (edited and with an introduction by Ernst Wangermann), London 1968.

What I have wanted to suggest in this section is a framework for analysing the consequences for political organization of a territorial expansion of capital. I have intentionally depicted capital as politically opportunist: Germany exemplified the point but one could look equally well at the support that foreign firms have given to liberation movements in Africa. I have tried to outline the alternative forms of state organization which present themselves to such an opportunist capital, and the distinctions within the body of extending capital which may be thought to lead to differing interests among them. I have not devoted much attention to the strength and interests of what one might call the stranded nation states in a period of internationalization. This is clearly important for any discussion of the continued critical rivalry between nation states in an era of expanding capitals. The next section will therefore turn to this in the context of some suggestions on the contemporary international economy in the light of the previous discussion.

### 3. Capital and State in the Contemporary World Economy.

1. *Internationalization.* The period since 1950 has been characterised by a major increase in the internationalisation of capitalist economies, in the form of trade, investment and finance capital. In terms of direct investment alone the OECD calculated that by the end of 1966 for DAC countries foreign investment totalled \$90b., of which US firms accounted for \$54.5b, and UK firms \$16b. US direct investment abroad has now risen over five times its total in 1950. International trade has been growing, too, at an astonishing speed, while more recently we have seen the development of truly international private capital markets. In five years since 1963 the international bond market has grown by 900 per cent by the end of 1968 \$11.4b. worth of bonds had been issued on the international capital market, 75 per cent of them Eurobonds (\$8.6b.); while on the short-term market it is now estimated that there are in the region of \$35b. worth of Eurodollar deposits as against a figure of \$5b. for 1963.

This process has led to the increasing importance of foreign economic territory for sales, profits, and finance for major capitalist firms. Of the 100 largest US firms in the 1967 Fortune list, 62 had production facilities in 6 or more nations: for European firms the figures are only slightly smaller. Even more significantly, in 1965 81 US firms operating internationally had over 25 per cent of their sales or earnings derived from overseas operations, with 11 of them over 50 per cent and International Packers deriving as much as 96 per cent of their sales revenue from abroad.<sup>33</sup> On the financial side US firms have in recent years funded about 40 per cent of their overseas operations from cash flows generated abroad, 35 per cent from external sources abroad, and 25 per cent from capital transfers from the US. This last figure was heavily reduced after the Johnson measures in 1968, being largely replaced by borrowings on the Eurodollar market. The monetary restrictions in the

<sup>33</sup> See Brock and Leas, *Foreign Investment, Capital Controls and the Balance of Payments*, New York 1968, pp. 83-85; quoted in S. E. Rolfe, *The International Corporation in Perspective*, Atlantic Council, Mimeo. 1969.

us domestic market have caused a considerable inflow of Eurodollars into the us in the form of transfers from us branch banks abroad to their head offices, with their peculiar form of international liability.

The important point about these developments is that, being concentrated for the most part in the markets of developed capitalist countries overseas, where intranational state functions are extensively performed, there is a growing territorial non-coincidence between extending capital and its domestic state.

2. *The demand for international state functions.* As suggested in section II, we should distinguish between those extended capitals concerned primarily with the performance of intranational state functions and those concerned with trans-frontier operations. In the latter category, firms who have expanded primarily as trading concerns, either by the nature of their business or the stage of the overseas development, have dominated the French, German, Italian and Japanese international expansions: though many are now moving to the next stage of local assembly or more extensive local marketing companies. Such firms, primarily concerned with trade rather than foreign production, had, we suggested, a strong interest in international liberalization while being still firmly bound to their domestic state. In the case of the European countries we have discussed, however, the domestic states have been gradually less able to afford the protection, either in home or foreign markets, that dominant European capital has required. The resulting change in attitude towards the operation of economic state powers away from the nation state has been most marked in certain advanced sectors of French industry.<sup>34</sup> Thus we find 'threatened' capitals expanding abroad at the same time as finding inadequate support from their domestic state: both factors which strengthen an interest in the performance of international state functions.

The second group of firms most concerned with the co-ordinated execution of international state functions are those who have developed an international division of labour in production, either regionally, as in the Common Market, EFTA, the Sterling Area, or North America, or internationally. The operation of an international division of labour has of course characterized those international firms engaged in extraction for some years, particularly the Anglo-Saxon ones. A number are nevertheless engaged in setting up more integrated international production processes: Pechiney-Ugine's expansion into Africa since the mid-50's being an excellent example of a more general trend. In the manufacturing field IBM is strongly integrated, producing specialised parts from nine main plants, outside the us. Fords, Chrysler and General Motors are all developing integrated production facilities in Western Europe: and the same is true in a number of trading areas in less developed countries where consumer goods manufacturers distributed specialized plants country by country as the result of or a guard against local nationalism. Finally the preliminary results from the Harvard

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<sup>34</sup> An interesting discussion of the effects of the opening up of the French economy is given by B. Balassa, 'Whither French Planning' in *Quarterly Journals of Economics*, November 1965.

Business School Research Project on their investigations into the validity of the product cycle theory of trade suggests that this particular phasing of an international division of labour is not uncommon.<sup>35</sup>

The development of a widespread international integration of production within a firm is still in its early stages: but it is a clear trend, and it is significant that in the recent survey into the trade relations of US parents with their overseas affiliates it was found that 51.8 per cent of the exports from the parent companies surveyed, were channelled through foreign affiliates.<sup>36</sup>

Yet even those extending capitals which do not come into the two categories we have already discussed, have an interest in the performance of inter-national state functions in as much as the economy in which they operate is affected by changes in the world economy. The fact that national interdependence has also grown rapidly is therefore of the first importance in any assessment of the interests of extending capital.

3. *National economic interdependence.* Another face to the internationalization of capital is the decreasing independence of national economies, and their vulnerability to changes in external economic conditions. This has, of course, been true for some time as the inter-war depression showed, but the increase of trade, investment and finance capital flows have furthered the trend. The Common Market for example has both opened up and made more vulnerable the economies involved. The Germans swung from a current surplus in 1964 to large deficit in 1965: Italy which had had a current deficit in 1963 swung to a large surplus in 1965. These swings reflected both the easing of restrictions on capital movements as well as increased trade. France, too, was decisively opened up: exporting 9 per cent of the GNP value of traded goods to countries outside France and the associated territories, and importing 12.7 per cent in 1953. By 1963 these figures were 17.5 per cent and 19.2 per cent, and had already profoundly affected the nature of French foreign economic policy.<sup>37</sup>

In the capital market, Eurodollars have created a market which provides what is effectively an international interest rate. Eurodollars are denominated in dollars, which cuts down the exchange risk, and they have a cost of transfer as low as an eighth of a per cent. In Altman's words: 'Interest rates on deposits of all currencies that command a forward premium over the dollar tend to be lower by the amount of this premium than interest rates on Eurodollar deposits, while interest rates on deposits of all currencies that stand at a forward discount relative to the dollar tend to be higher by the amount of this discount than interest rates on Eurodollar deposits.' Forward exchange rates, which had previously provided an international form of interest structure

<sup>35</sup> R. Vernon, 'International Investment and International Trade in the Product Cycle', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 1966. See also: S. Hirsch, *Location of Industry and International Competitiveness*, Oxford 1967.

<sup>36</sup> Marie T. Bradshaw, 'US Exports to Foreign Affiliates of US Firms', *Survey of Current Business*, May 1969.

<sup>37</sup> Balassa, *op. cit.* p. 540.



have become subsidiary to Eurodollar rates. National monetary systems have grown increasingly exposed.<sup>38</sup>

4. *Decreasing national powers.* Economic internationalization has opened economies and increased instability. At the same time the process has weakened the existing national state powers in their ability to control this instability. In the case of Eurodollars, national monetary policies in Europe have undoubtedly been weakened. First, the market provides a source of credit outside the control of national authorities. Second, as we have just seen, their character as international vehicle assets acts as a transmitter of changes in rate structures abroad into the home money market. Thirdly, they have undoubtedly eased the process of international speculation, with all that that entails for domestic monetary and financial policy. The influence on the US economy is less clear. Certainly it seems that it affects US monetary policy much less than the policies of other capitalist countries.

In addition to the corrosive effects of the international money market, international firms have a flexibility and mode of operations which further blunts traditional instruments of domestic economic management. This has been clear for some time in terms of foreign investment in underdeveloped countries. In many cases, such as the copper investment by Charter Consolidated in Mauretania, Keynesian instruments are fixed by long-term contract: tax rates, sources of funds, exchange rates, and so on. There is still little hard evidence for developed economies, however. What we do know derives from discussions with individual firms and the following points emerge:

a) Firms operating with an international division of labour will commonly not alter the flows of goods and amounts produced in the country following a change in exchange rate, since production depends on an international market with inputs in a fixed proportion. The change in price of one input is unlikely to substantially effect the overall demand. This has certainly been true of IBM after the UK devaluation.

b) The financial flexibility of international firms allows them to circumvent to some degree both exchange controls and the capital value effects of exchange rate changes. One channel for the movement of funds is by now well-known, that of international intra-company transfer pricing. The extent to which this is used varies: but certainly in the drug industry it extensively operates (as the Eli Lilly case revealed), as in the oil industry, in consumer durables, for bank charges and so on. But equally important are other ways of shifting funds: intra-company loans, leads and lags in trading payments, payments of fees and royalties to parent companies. Companies have the choice as to which country is most profitable for raising finance: Phillips make a practise for example of borrowing in weak currency areas, which indirectly further weakens the currency. When most currency changes by developed capitalist economies are capable of being foreseen, the fact

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<sup>38</sup> O. Altman, 'Foreign Markets for Dollars, Sterling and Other Currencies,' *IMF Staff Papers*, Dec. 1960-61. See also the same author's 'Eurodollars: Some further comments,' *IMF Staff Papers*, March 1965.

that extensive hedging takes place is not at all surprising. Nevertheless it contributes substantially to the instability of international exchange rates, as the operations of certain international firms in the German exchange crisis showed.

c) Financial independence. The access to the international capital markets (of which international firms are major users from the information that is extant) and to their own sources of funds both within any operation or internationally, further dampens the effects of government monetary policies. In Australia Brash found that us foreign investors were re-investing 60 per cent of their profits in the country, and drawing much of the remainder from intra-company loans. The organization of international finance is often the most centralized of all international firm operations.<sup>39</sup>

There is accordingly a tendency for the process of internationalization to increase the potential economic instability in the world economy at the same time as decreasing the power of national governments to control economic activity even within their own borders.<sup>40</sup>

5. *States and the Balance of Payments.* If national capitalist governments increasingly lack instruments to control international capital, their policies do nevertheless have an important effect: namely to further weaken their own national capital. We see here an important contradiction in any era of internationalization. On the one hand the disruptive effects of foreign take-overs, the internal re-organization of domestic industry, and the social and economic policies resulting from the balance of payments difficulties of an economy in the process of being incorporated (Britain, France, Ireland) all call for a firmer marshalling of the national capital, and a more sustained defence of its interests. On the other, the policies followed to correct a balance of payments deficit are often such as to further weaken the national capital and increase the domination of foreign capital within the national economy.

The clearest case of this is Ireland, where national planning acknowledges the country's dependence on foreign capital by leaving capital inflows as the residual in the planning process. Balance of Payments forecasts are made on the basis of a target rate of growth, and deficits in that balance are intended to be filled by the inflow of foreign capital, at the same time as domestic capital is restricted by deflationary measures. Similar curbing of domestic economic activity at the same time as welcoming foreign investment for balance of payments purposes has been a feature of British policy, and now, to some extent, of the French.

#### 4. Conclusion

I have been concerned to sketch out a framework which would allow a more substantial approach to the problem of the effects of an inter-

<sup>39</sup> D. Brash, *American Investment in Australian Industry*, Canberra 1966, pp. 91-92.

<sup>40</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this point in relation to Britain see: R. Murray, 'The Internationalisation of capital and the British Economy,' *The Spectator*, April 1971, no. 11.

nationalization of capital on existing political organizations. In doing so, I have tried to show the importance of analysing the *interests vis à vis* the performance of state economic functions of various extended capitals, as well as the *powers* of the capital's domestic state to support its capital. I suggested that there was no necessary link between a capital and its state in the area of extension, that capital was rather a political opportunist, and that existing states often suffered a decrease in their powers as a result of internationalization. Thus while states may by their nature remain structurally opposed in economic rivalry, their powers, in terms of the capital they represent and the ability to perform economic functions, will vary. Where these powers increase there need be no contradiction between a nation state and its extended capital. But weaker states in a period of internationalization come to suit the interests neither of their own besieged capital nor of the foreign investor.

For any analysis of imperialism, the elaboration of the connections between not only states, but the states and their capitals seems to me a first priority. Only then will we be in a position to present more fully what one might call the territorial dialectics of capitalism.

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## Comment on Lucien Rey (NLR 66)

The fundamental premiss of Rey's comment runs as follows: 'there is little of value written on women's oppression within the Marxist tradition and perhaps even less within the Freudian tradition.' Consequently, the feminist critique of Hegel, Freud, Rousseau, etc, is more important than a Marxist critique of feminism, especially since Marxism has not produced the concepts with which to criticize feminism convincingly. So Rey concludes: 'feminism is not incompatible with Marxism; in fact, they are mutually necessary. The process of Marxizing feminism can only take place *pari passu* with the process of feminizing Marxism.'

This view situates an ideology (feminism) on the same level as a science (Marxism). Moreover, Rey—not surprisingly—nowhere specifies what he means by feminism. For if he did so he would have to account for the unfortunate fact that each of the three 'feminist' authors in question takes up positions which are anathema to him. Greer's feminism is based on a widely romantic world view: Figs herself balances *Emile* against the *Social Contract*; Millett insists on the historical and scientific value of Engels' *Origins*. All three are anti-technological and humanistic. As for the revolutionary potential of the current women's liberation movement, Figs does not even mention its existence, Greer explicitly rejects any form of organization, while Millett limits its role to that of instruction. While rightly insisting on the importance of a feminist critique of bourgeois culture, is Rey not at the same time romanticizing feminism and thereby emptying it of content? And is the critique of this question not itself a part of bourgeois ideology? The notion of 'feminized Marxism' or a 'Marxized feminism' is an absurdity. Feminism may express an awareness among women of their oppression, and has in this sense played a largely progressive role, but the task of Marxists is to forge *revolutionary* consciousness. Furthermore, revolutionary practice not based on a scientific theory is inconceivable. Feminism cannot provide such a theory, and that is why Marxism is the only possible starting-point—both for a theoretical understanding and for a revolutionary intervention in the current women's liberation movement. Rey is right when he points to the inadequacy hitherto of Marxist analysis of women's oppression: indeed in the concluding paragraph of her review Branka Magas spoke of 'the failure of Marxism itself to develop a fully worked out and adequate theory of the role of the family in advanced capitalism, or of the specificity of women's oppression'. But it is in part through a rigorous critique of current non-Marxist and non-scientific analyses that Marxists can at once develop Marxist theory itself and begin to provide the scientific analysis necessary to any revolutionary practice within the women's liberation movement. The organizational reflection of the feminism/Marxism complementarity which Rey seeks to establish is the complementarity of the 'women's' and 'men's' revolutionary parties of which he speaks.

The idea that women should form a separate revolutionary Party implies regression to pre-Leninist and pre-Marxist ideas—moreover it is a regression to the *romantic* conception that the most oppressed group is necessarily the most revolutionary group in society. This view was maintained by such pre-Marxist German revolutionists as Weitling and it was one that Marx bitterly fought. According to Weitling, the most revolutionary class was the lumpen-proletariat because it was undoubtedly more miserable than the working class proper. And in 1848 the lumpen also sometimes showed themselves capable of a destructive ardour that appeared to lend substance to Weitling's theories. Marx insisted that the really revolutionary class was the one which not only had no stake in the old property regime but also represented the possibility of a new social order; the proletariat could destroy capitalism because of its position in the social formation. Its labour power was the motor of the forces of production which were in contradiction with capitalist relations of production. Clearly nothing essential has to change in this analysis today. Any idea of substituting the perspective of peasants, women, ethnic minorities, etc. for the revolutionary class standpoint of the proletariat would be quite simply a break with Marxism in favour of some variety of populism. The revolt of all these groups—who frequently comprise in part a section of the proletariat—clearly has a crucial anti-capitalist potential and the working class has a duty to support all their struggles.

But one should not confuse the potential of these oppressed groups in the struggle against capitalism with the proletariat's ability to furnish the standpoint necessary to create a new society. This derives from its decisive implantation within the capitalist social formation, which enables it to mobilize the forces of production.

To suggest importing into the revolutionary Party any of the particularisms and divisions created or sustained by bourgeois society is to fail completely to accept Lenin's contribution to theory of the revolutionary party. Based on the universal class standpoint of the proletariat, the revolutionary party must seek to advance the interests of every exploited or oppressed group. The working class has no material interest in the preservation of any form of oppression or exploitation; such is not true generically of women, blacks, students, etc. Sections of all these groups have a direct material interest in the preservation of capitalist society. The Leninist Party brings together all those who accept the class standpoint of the proletariat and are willing to fight for it, without respect to their class origin, ethnic or cultural origin, sex or age. Of course, bourgeois ideology of every sort including male chauvinism, will tend to infiltrate a revolutionary party but if it cannot be defeated *there* then it is difficult to see where it can be defeated. This, of course, certainly does not rule out separate womens' organizations and mass movements. Indeed these are necessary, and would certainly exercise a healthy influence on inner party life. Moreover the agencies of dual power in the revolutionary period could well include specific representation for women in every category (i.e. womens' soviets, and a relevant proportion of womens' delegates within each soviet).

One further consequence of Rey's espousal of the notion of a 'feminized

Marxism' is, a serious undervaluing of Engels. Engels' *Origins* may, as Rey claims, do only what any Marxist would do even if it had never been written, when it links the oppression of women with the class struggle. Yet, in spite of its inconsistencies, inadequacies and often mythological dimensions, *Origins* goes a long way further towards providing a theory of the family and hence of women's oppression than Millett, Figez or Greer. A more valid line of criticism of Engels would stress his failure to analyse the particular balance between family and society in industrial capitalism, leaving a vacuum that is still with us today.

Perhaps a proper understanding of the role of the family was impossible before Freud. In spite of his initial statement, Rey agrees that Freud cannot simply be dismissed. The important thing to point out is that the current critique of Freud and psychoanalysis will lead not so much to a revaluation of the scientific content of the theory (such as the attempt to eliminate the Oedipus complex which Rey mentions) as to the stripping away of the layers of pernicious ideology which surround both its object and its method. Rey is right to say that the next step will probably not be a simple integration of Marx and Freud. While each can provide valuable insights into the other, the two sciences have essentially different objects.

In conclusion, there were two themes present in Magas' article which are, implicitly or explicitly, called into question by Rey and which are important to reaffirm. In the first place, to convict any given thinker of 'male chauvinism' is not sufficient to nullify any value he may have—indeed certain 'male-chauvinist' thinkers may have helped, and may still help, women in their struggle for self-emancipation. Rousseau is one example, but he is not alone—indeed Marx himself was not entirely free of male chauvinism. It is not the case either that Rousseau is a typical Romantic, or that one can possibly identify anti-technological ideology, male chauvinism, etc, exclusively with Romanticism. A rejection of Western technological rationalism is not a Romantic monopoly: Kierkegaard and Comte are two instructive examples in this respect—unless Rey wants to stretch 'romanticism' to include them too? And is there no romanticism precisely of technology? Rey first suggests that Rousseau is an ideologue of the past, but later—following Figez—that his theses are 'functional in some way' to contemporary capitalism. In fact, in blaming Rousseau, or Romanticism, for male chauvinism they both avoid the more difficult task of confronting the specificity of contemporary bourgeois ideology of women.

The second theme, which runs through Magas' original article, is this: there exists a complex problematic, which remains largely to be explored, constituted by the differing ideological and theoretical stances articulated historically by the various social classes towards the social position of women. It was this combination of sexual and class politics which provided the article with its title—and not, as Rey implies, simply a desire to contrast Marxism with feminism, although it is indeed the case that feminism cannot provide a basis for understanding this problematic, and that Marxism alone, potentially, can.

*Branka Magas and Robin Blackburn*

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